Theoretical and Discussion Journal of the Communist Party

MARXISM TODAY

Two shillings and sixpence

August 1970

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WHO RULES INDIA?

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MARXISM TODAY

THEORETICAL AND DISCUSSION JOURNAL OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY

Volume 14 Number 8

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Orders and Subscriptions Usual agents or Central Books Ltd., 37 Gray's Inn Road, London, WC1

Subscription rates Six issues 17s 6d Twelve issues 35s

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Editorial Comments

FIFTY YEARS AGO—on July 31st and August 1st, 1920—The Communist Unity Convention was held and the Communist Party of Great Britain established. Two main Marxist groupings (British Socialist Party and main section of the Socialist Labour Party) were brought together along with other militant groups and individuals. At the end of January 1921, at a Second Congress, the Workers' Socialist Federation along with further groupings came into the new Party, and in March 1921 a group from the Left-wing of the Independent Labour Party.

"It is not a new split", wrote the *Daily Herald*, then a militant paper commenting on the Unity Convention. "It is indeed a fusion. But it is more than that. It is the creation of an organisation for the expression in action of a definite and existent body of revolutionary thought . . . They are preparing to face the problem which too many of us are inclined temperamentally to evade—the problem of the 'how' and 'now' of the British revolution".

It was not easy to raise the revolutionary banner in a country where reformism was so deeply entrenched in the working class movement, where most of the key positions of the Labour Movement were in reformist hands.

In the course of 50 years of continuous struggle the Communist Party has certainly at times shown weaknesses and made mistakes. But it has always and patiently explained that, whilst reformism will never succeed in ending capitalism in Britain, whilst the state, far from "neutral", is a state of the capitalist class, there *is* a way, a revolutionary road along which the workers and their allies can successfully defeat capitalism and build socialism in Britain.

The Communist Party has continuously sought to give to the working class and people a socialist understanding based on Marxism-Leninism, a socialist consciousness, to apply to the specific conditions of Britain the Marxist conception of advance to socialism, to work out, that is, a strategy of British revolution, today embodied in our programme *The British Road to Socialism.*

Continuously it has sought to help the working people to fight on all the immediate issues that confront them, to strengthen their mass organisations, to bring unity between the different streams of struggle.

To the reformist theory and practice of support for the reactionary foreign policy of the bourgeoisie (disguised sometimes as a call for "continuity" of foreign policy), to the reformist acceptance and defence of colonialism, the Party has opposed the theory and practice of international working class solidarity.

We are preparing a special issue of *Marxism Today* (the October issue) to celebrate this 50th Anniversary. It will contain, amongst other material, the report which John Gollan is giving to next September's meeting of the Executive Committee on the 50th Anniversary, an article by Peter Kerrigan on the Communist Party in the Industrial Struggle, one by Idris Cox on the Internationalist Record of the Communist Party, a study by Nan Green on the Communist Party during the Spanish Civil War with special reference to the British detachments of the International Brigade, and one by George Short on the Communist Party in the North East during the General Strike.

THE GENERAL ELECTION

The election of a Tory Government in the recent General Election ". . . is a political set-back to the whole working class and progressive movement". In a wide ranging review of the results of the election made in a report to the Executive Committee of the Communist Party on June 27th[1] John Gollan pinpointed the causes for Labour's defeat in the right-wing policies pursued by the Wilson Government, outlined the tasks facing the Left and the Communist Party in the new situation and analysed the particular reasons for the setback in votes given to the 58 Communist candidates.

Of great interest is his analysis of the actual pattern of voting in this country both in this and in previous elections held since the war. This proves that there has been no

[1] See *Comment*, July 4th 1970.

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massive swing to the Tories and that no government either Labour or Tory has ever won a *majority* of the votes at any election. Thus because of the grossly undemocratic electoral process in this country at the centre of which is the two-party system, a small swing of the order of 6 per cent or so can give us a government with a majority of around 40 although it only secured a minority of the votes. (15,151,367 people voted against the Tories and 13,106,965 for them).

The report posed some of the problems facing the Communist Party as a result of the election—why the decline in votes for its candidates in a general situation of advancing mass struggle? Should the Communist Party contest on a smaller scale in view of its size and small resources? What is the place of the electoral struggle in the general framework of the role and tasks of the Communist Party and its fight for socialism? How do we break the political see-saw of Tory-Labour ins and outs? And many others.

All these and related questions are being discussed vigorously in the columns of the *Morning Star* and *Comment* and will be further discussed in Party Branches in preparation for the District Congresses which will be held in the autumn, and we shall discuss in *Marxism Today* some of the wider problems involved.

But the report is above all a call for a fight against defeatism and, especially, for the development of the widest, united mass struggle to bring the Tory Government down well before the end of its statutory five years.

TURN THE SETBACK INTO A VICTORY

We published in our January issue extracts from the speech of Fidel Castro on the battle for the 10 million ton sugar harvest. It was a moving call to action.

In the course of May it became clear, that despite the tremendous efforts made, and the very large increase in the cutting of cane and of the sugar ground from it, the 10 million ton target would not be fulfilled; instead the final result would be somewhere between 8 and 9 millions. Eight million tons it should be noted would mean an advance of 10 per cent on the largest sugar harvest ever achieved under capitalism, a 44.9 per cent advance on the average of the last 10 years of capitalism in Cuba, and a 79 per cent increase over last year.

It is a tribute to the Cuban revolution that no attempts whatsoever was made to withhold from the Cuban people the news that the ten million tons would not be achieved. Fidel announced the fact on May 19th to a great rally held outside the former US Embassy in Havana to welcome back the kidnapped fishermen, and the next day, on May 20th, he made, on radio and television, a long detailed human analysis of the reasons for what is both a defeat and a victory.

The announcement to the people, said Fidel, *had* to be made:

> "It was a question of elementary respect for the feelings of the people, of elementary loyalty to the people and confidence in people, with the absolute certainty that the news would never demoralise the workers".

Nor was there any attempt to put the blame on the people:

> "We say with absolute certainty that the people didn't lose the battle. The administrative apparatus and the leaders of the Revolution are the ones who lost the battle. The people have more than measured up to the ten millions".

The failure to achieve the full target lay, in Fidel's opinion, not in the quantity of cane cut, as had always been the problem in the past, but in neglect of the mills' capacity to grind the cane, a neglect of the industrial side of the operation. In some places it was necessary to transport the cane relatively long distances to mills where it could be ground. In some mills there were low yields of sugar. There were considerable problems with some of the new industrial equipment:

> "The battle of the ten million wasn't lost in the last year, or in the last two years; we lost it in the last four years and we lost it in an area where we had not expected to lose, because it had never been the main problem".

Castro always speaks to the people—simply, personally, directly. It is one of the great strengths of Marxism-Leninism that it is based on the truth, on reality, and one of the great strengths of real revolutionary leaders is to have such confidence in the people that the truth, good or bad, victory or defeat, advance or retreat, is told without gloss or varnish.

These too were moving speeches which gave every confidence in the slogan launched —"to turn the setback into a victory".[2]

[2] The two speeches are contained in full in *Granma*, weekly review in English, year 5, No. 22, of May 31, 1970. Extracts will be printed in *Comment*.

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THE COLOMBIAN GUERRILLAS

There has been in Colombia a long proud history of guerrilla struggle. In the literature that has arisen from that struggle one recent book is especially vivid, moving and instructive. It is the account by Jacopo Arenas (recently published by the Éditions Sociales in Paris) of a particular episode of guerrilla warfare—the struggle of Marquetalia, which lasted 533 days in 1964-65.[3]

The author is a member of the Executive Committee of the Communist Party of Colombia and of the General Staff of the FARC (Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces) formed at the beginning of 1966 (when the Marquetalian struggle described in this book was over) to regroup the guerrillas of Colombia.

His book is based on a campaign journal kept during the offensive against the revolutionary base of Marquetalia which was launched by the Government's armed forces on May 18th, 1964, and which involved more than 16,000 troops as well as artillery and planes. But it is more than just a diary of daily events, for it contains interviews with guerrilla leaders, and thoughts on the general nature and strategy of guerrilla warfare.

Marquetalia is a high mountainous area with a central plateau—in all about 800 square kilometres—inaccessible except by narrow mountain paths, a fact which, on early occasions, had helped the revolutionary peasantry to defend it from army attacks.

Arenas' book gives an unromanticised picture of the realities of guerrilla warfare dealing with daily difficulties of disease, food supplies, movement of the population in the areas under heavy attack.

But it also points to the effects of guerrilla life on the formation of character and outlook. He writes of what he calls proletarian humanism:

> "One learns to live in a community, to share trouble, privations, tragedies and joy. One man's sorrow is felt by all, another's joy is a collective patrimony."

GUERRILLAS AND THE PEOPLE

A valuable part of the book are the notes taken by Arenas during his discussions with Manuel Marulanda, former peasant, father of five, commander of the Marquetalian guerrillas, and member of the Executive Committee of the Communist Party of Colombia.

Manuel insists again and again that, in his experience, guerrilla forces must strive to maintain the closest links with the people. The people must not only feel but visibly see that the guerrillas are on *their* side, helping them to struggle:

> "A clear well-defined distinction must be established between *our* attitude to the people and that of the enemy. Our attitude should be marked by love of the people, by our defence of the people, whilst that of the official armies is marked by hatred of the people, by violence, by theft, by war against them."

The guerrillas, he considers, must not only have immediate *military* aims:

> "Guerrillas must develop mass policies, must have a continuous contact with the masses. For a guerrilla movement without support of the masses is likely to disappear."

The guerrilla movement, he thinks, needs a broad programme:

> "A guerrilla movement without a programme is like a man without a head."

He sees the Communist Party as a vanguard revolutionary detachment which "leads and guides the liaison with the masses, puts forward the policy, the military and political line, that the guerrilla movement will follow".

These generalisations based on the experience of the Colombian guerrilla struggle are put forward in a completely undogmatic way, avoiding any attempt to argue that the guerrilla movement must at all times and in all countries take the form that it took during the courageous struggles in Marquetalia.

THE ENGELS ANNIVERSARY

This year sees the 150th anniversary of the birth of Frederick Engels, born on November 28th, 1820. As a first contribution towards the celebration of this event, the *World Marxist Review* convened a two-day conference in Prague at the beginning of July.

Communist Parties of 34 countries accepted the invitation to send delegates, and, of these, 26 read papers on the various aspects of Engels' many activities both in the realm of theory and in the field of practical politics and political organisation.

Hymie Fagan, who represented the British Communist Party, read his paper on "Engels

[3] Jacopo Arenas—"Colombie: Guérillas du Peuple", Éditions Sociales, Paris.

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and the British Working Class Movement". He concentrated on the way Engels had participated in every struggle of the British workers, from the Chartist Movement in the 1840s right down to the Dock Strike and the powerful struggle for the Eight Hour Day, in which young Marxists like Tom Mann had actively participated in the 1890s.

He told Conference of the profound effect Engels had on the growing Movement when it began to turn away from its position as the "tail" of the Liberal Party and was moving towards the formation not only of a "new" trade unionism but to an independent party of the working class which would fight for its emancipation and for Socialism.

Engels' speeches and writings, particularly in the journal of the London Trade Council, the *Labour Standard,* from 1881 onwards, made a deep impact on the young and active "new" trade unionists who were leading the breakaway not only from the "old" trade union leaders with their slogan of "A Fair Day's Wage for a Fair Day's Work" (Engels brilliantly proved in the *Labour Standard* how *unfair* this slogan was to the working class) and with their concentration on the economic struggle, but from the Liberal Party too of which many of the "old" trade union leaders were members.

Engels, Hymie Fagan explained, provided much of the theoretical and practical ammunition needed for this struggle. The British working class must prepare itself for power, he wrote, and one of the first steps towards this was to turn to politics and not leave it in the hands of the bourgeoisie, the greatest enemies of the working class. It meant the organisation of an independent working class party, which together with the trades unions could sweep all before it.

The best organised working class in Europe had to use the power which was already potentially in its hands, the actual majority it possessed in every large town in Britain. They had to use this power to send large numbers of working men to parliament who would challenge the bourgeoisie politically, whilst the trade unions would fight them outside on the economic field.

If the working men of Britain did this, there was no power in the world which could for a day resist them organised as a class. The workmen of England had but to *will* and they would be the masters.

Summaries of the papers which were read will appear in a coming number of *World Marxist Review,* whilst a book containing the full text of the very interesting contributions will be published towards the end of the year.

Marxism Today will be publishing a number of articles and documents related to the life and activities of Frederick Engels, the first of which will be a study on "Engels and the English Working Class in Manchester, 1842-44" by John Smethurst, Ruth and Edmund Frow.

THE MANCHESTER MARTYRS

In July Lawrence and Wishart published an outstanding book on an Irish theme, the three "Manchester Martyrs"—Allen, Larkin and O'Brien—who were hanged "on the scaffold high" outside Salford Gaol on November 23rd, 1867, for the alleged murder of an English policeman.[4]

These were the men whose deaths inspired the famous song "God save Ireland!":

> "God save Ireland, said the heroes;
> God save Ireland, said they all.
> Whether on the scaffold high or on battlefield we die
> O what matter if for Erin dear we fall."

The book is by Paul Rose, Labour MP for Blackley, Manchester, where the martyrs have their memorial. Chairman of the "Campaign for Democracy in Ulster" and joint-secretary of the "Anglo-Irish Parliamentary Committee", Paul Rose is a member of Parliament who has played—and continues to play—an outstanding part in support of the cause of Irish freedom and unity.

The deaths of the Martyrs came as the closing chapter of the great Fenian agitations. It was in September, 1867, that two leading Fenians came to England after the failure of the uprising in Ireland, and were arrested in Manchester. As they were being carried to prison in a van, a daring and successful rescue was organised, in the course of which a police sergeant was killed by a bullet fired to break a lock. In the round-up that followed, three Irishmen were selected to pay the penalty for the rescue and for the sergeant's death.

The execution was denounced as an act of brutal political reprisal and one more crime of the English rulers against Ireland. There have been many more since. And to this day Irishmen and friends of Ireland

[4] Paul Rose M.P.—*The Manchester Martyrs*, Lawrence & Wishart, 25/-.

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still "keep the memory ever green of the boys who smashed the van".

In this truly thrilling book Paul Rose retells their story, examines anew the evidence on which they were convicted, examines the role of the Fenian movement which produced them and, finally, estimates the extent of the English radical support that was then mobilised for the cause of Ireland and the part played within it by the working-class movement and the First International.

DIALOGUE WITH THE QUAKERS

For the second time in the last three years a residential Dialogue between Quakers and a *Marxism Today* group took place over the weekend June 26th-28th. Some 15 people participated in what turned out to be not only a most concentrated and invigorating discussion and argument but also a most enjoyable one.

The main, overall topic for discussion was: "The Human Person, His Rights and Responsibilities". This was introduced by two papers, one from the Quaker, the other from the *Marxism Today* side.

A number of important points were common to both the opening statements although the approach was, of course, fundamentally different in both cases. These common points were especially connected with the social character of man, the fact that it is only possible to speak of the individual within the wider social context, but that, conversely, the individual has his own unique character, potentialities and contribution to make.

This problem of the relation of the individual to society and, conversely, of society to the individual (for society is the product of man in the same way as man is the product of society), in its economic, social, political and cultural aspects dominated the discussion throughout. It was broken down into discussion in depth at individual sessions around such questions as the nature of man, and the changing of human nature, the relation of the individual to society and the problems of changing society, the social order—capitalism. Is Marx's definition of class an adequate one in the complex conditions of today? Alienation, how does the alienation of the individual reflect itself in modern society and can it be said to exist in a socialist society? What are our yardsticks in approaching the problem of good and evil and, of course, the question of violence—how far can it be justified in any cause? This gave rise to the related problem which has been discussed for so long—and will be continued to be discussed, of the relation of ends and means.

The discussion clarified a number of the points on some of which views came closer together, while on others, the differences remain. The atmosphere however throughout remained friendly, free and tolerant, both groups learning from one another.

A final session discussed next steps and emphasised the need to develop such discussions on a wider scale especially outside London, in the major Districts. Readers of *Marxism Today* willing either to initiate or to participate in such discussions outside London are asked to communicate with us.

MARXIST VIEW OF WILFRID SCAWEN BLUNT

Our Party has done a good deal to revive the memory of Wilfrid Scawen Blunt (1840-1922), the Sussex squire whose passionate hatred of imperialism brought him into close co-operation with the struggle for national liberation in Ireland, India, Egypt and Sudan, in the last twenty years of the nineteenth century and up to 1914—and into years of ostracism by his own class and, in the case of Ireland, into jail.

Blunt's many books and pamphlets, his poetry and his diaries reflect his sentiments in full measure: and it is significant that Marx in November 1882, only a few months before his death, made a number of extracts from an article by Blunt—"The Egyptian Revolution"—which was printed in the *Nineteenth Century* in September that year. This discovery, in Marx's rough notebooks held by the Institute of Marxism-Leninism, is only one of the many noteworthy features of a new book, *Wilfrid Scawen Blunt: Life, Work and Struggle,* by Alla Mihailovna Lyubarskaya ("Nauka" Publishing House, Leningrad, 1969, 395 pages).

Although there have been two previous biographies of Blunt, this is the first written from a Marxist standpoint, doing full justice to his political battles, his materialist philosophy and to the place of his poetry in the history of English literature. The book is the fruit of nearly twenty years of patient and painstaking research, dominated by the fact that many of Blunt's writings had to be sought for in libraries scattered far and wide

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over the USSR: and nearly fifty pages of reference notes bear witness to the care with which Lyubarskaya has followed up every possible clue, even in the most rare British and American magazines. Incidentally, her translations of Blunt's "Love Sonnets of Proteus" (1880) and his later sequence of lyric verse "Esther" (1892) —which made him a high reputation in 19th century English literature—are as true to his spirit as her renderings of his poetical denunciations of British imperialism which earned him the fierce hatred of all "society" —"The Wind and the Whirlwind" (1883, after Gladstone's savage bombardment of Alexandria): "The Canon of Aughrim" and "In Vinculis" ("In Chains") written in 1888, during and after his imprisonment for supporting the Fenians: and, most powerful of all, "Satan Absolved" (1899) inspired by recent British wars in South Africa, the Indian North-West Frontier and the Sudan, and no less by the parallel wave of imperialist hysteria during the nineties, exemplified by verses of Kipling and Swinburne printed that same year in *The Times*.

Even to bring to the knowledge of the present generation the great volume of material which Alla Lyubarskaya has assembled from British sources would make an English translation of her book a valuable contribution to British history. But over and above this, as Andrew Rothstein writes in the preface, what makes the book particularly interesting is that it has been published in the Soviet Union, where the first Socialist State "disposed", in a series of mighty blows, of the sinister Tsarist variety of that imperialism which was Blunt's chosen and lifelong enemy: and brought one large group of the colonial peoples to the new life—in freedom, equality and prosperity—of which Blunt dreamed for them.

ROBERT OWEN IN THE USA

We are glad to be able once again to comment on the activity of the American Institute for Marxist Studies (AIMS). All the more so since its latest work of Marxist scholarship—No. 6 in the AIMS Historical Studies—is devoted to one of the foremost pioneers of British socialism and of the Co-operative movement.[5]

The book consists mainly of a re-publication of three most important speeches by Robert Owen in the United States, two of them addresses to the United States Congress, both in 1825, and his Fourth of July oration in 1826. Their re-publication after nearly 150 years is, in itself, a great service to historiography, for they were in danger of being totally lost.

But of course their content is of the greatest interest, throwing light as it does on Owen's own especial, personal, brand of Utopian Socialism, as well as the breadth, generosity and enormous humanity of his views.

The speeches to the American Congress were aimed firstly at outlining his general views on changing the social order and winning the American Congress to support the idea of socialism—no less—and to present in detail his ideas for their practical implementation in the socialist colony he initiated at New Harmony, Indiana, USA towards the end of 1824.

This was to be a secular socialist community in contrast to similar communities established on a religious basis. It was to be run on the principle of "union, co-operation, common property, genuine liberty and equality", including equality between men and women, and providing, amongst other things, free schools and libraries.

Owen brought with him to New Harmony some of the outstanding thinkers and personalities of his time, people eminent especially in the fields of education and science. And Owen was a pioneer especially in the field of education, emphasising the need to combine it with productive activity and the great role of science both in education and production. These were aspects of Owen's thought which Marx commended.

In his valuable introduction, Oakley C. Johnson outlines briefly the progressive causes and ideas with which Owen's name will always be associated, some of the causes for the failure of New Harmony, as well as indicating some of the weaknesses in Owen's approach to socialism. But he emphasises especially the impact made by Owen's ideas on scientific, educational and cultural movements in the USA and the important part played by four of Owen's children (three sons and a daughter) who stayed in the USA and played a prominent part in progressive political and social movements in the USA.

Owen's basic weakness was a failure to grasp the revolutionary transforming role

[5] *Robert Owen in the United States*. Edited by Oakley C. Johnson, Foreword by A. L. Morton. (Published for A.I.M.S. by Humanities Press, New York).

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of the working class, or to see the class struggle as the motor of historical change, to depend on convincing the ruling class of the practical and moral superiority of socialism over capitalism by argument and moral exhortation as well as on the elaboration of the most complete and detailed plans for the new society. Nonetheless Owen remains a great forerunner of the British Labour Movement.

DEATH OF MICHAL KALECKI

The sudden death of the Polish economist, Professor Michal Kalecki, in April, was a grave loss both to Polish economics and to socialist economists everywhere—especially as it comes so soon after the death of that other great Polish economist Oskar Lange; both of whom had been celebrated a few years back by having collective volumes of essays published in their honour by Polish Scientific Publishers (PWN) in Warsaw.

Kalecki, who was born in Lodz in 1899, first became known in the middle '30s for a booklet called *An Essay on the Theory of Business Cycle,* 1933, which has been regarded as anticipating the essentials of the Keynesian theory of employment and unemployment; although one could say that *his* theory was to a large extent set in a Rosa Luxemburg framework (to whom he acknowledges some indebtedness). The essentials of this early essay, together with one or two other writings of the '30s (including one entitled "Money and Real Wages") were published in English four years ago under the title of *Studies in the Theory of Business Cycles, 1933-1939,* with an introduction by Joan Robinson (PWN and Blackwell jointly).

Kalecki was personally known to many economists in this country, having come abroad on a Rockefeller Scholarship first to Sweden and then to London and to Cambridge in the two years before the war. During the war he worked at the Oxford Institute of Statistics, and in 1946 took up a post at the United Nations in its Department of Economic Affairs. This post he resigned in 1955 in order to return to Poland, where for a time he was a vice-chairman of the Planning Commission (working particularly on long-term planning) and then Professor at the Central School of Planning and Statistics in Warsaw, where his influence upon students was quite remarkable. From this post he retired two years ago. His well-known (and in his own country most influential) work, *Introduction to the Theory of Growth in a Socialist Economy,* appeared in an English translation (published jointly by PWN and Blackwell) only a few weeks before his untimely death.

In the summer of 1969 he visited Cambridge again to give some lectures, though his health was already failing.

CLASS STRUCTURE IN BRITAIN

The article on Class Structure in Britain by Alan Hunt, published in the June issue, was based on a report given to a recent conference organised by the Education Department of the Communist Party.

It was suggested at the conference that there should be as wide as possible a discussion on this subject. Therefore we hope that readers will contribute to this discussion in the columns of *Marxism Today.*

"FOR ALL TIME AND ALL MEN"

Historical studies by the many competent workers at the Institute of Marxism-Leninism in Moscow rarely become available for foreign readers who do not know Russian. A welcome departure, therefore, is an elegantly-produced little volume about the writing, distribution and translations of Marx's *Capital,* by Anna Vasilievna Uroyeva. Entitled "For All Time and All Men",[6] the book deals at length in 252 pages with the appearance and effect of the publication of the great work in Germany, in Russia (the first country in which a translation appeared, in 1872), in France (1872-1875, in a series of parts), in Poland (1884-1890, with interruptions due to Tsarist repression) and in Britain (Samuel Moore's translation edited by Engels, in 1887). There are shorter notes on the translations elsewhere (Denmark in 1885 and Italy in 1886), and on abridged editions in other countries. An appendix gives a full list of all these editions.

The book is made particularly attractive by profuse illustrations—reproductions of title-pages and advertisements in various languages, photographs of translators and publishers, etc.—and by a binding which in neatness and design is an innovation. Anna Uroyeva's work, in passing, gives a useful guide at each stage to the politics of the country concerned, at the time when the editions appeared.

[6] Available from Central Books Ltd., at 13s.

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Who Rules India?

Conrad Wood

For two decades after Independence (1947) India's ruling party, the Indian National Congress, had overwhelming dominance over the political life of the nation. In the Lower House of the Indian parliament, Congress held between 357 and 371 seats in the period 1952-67. This represented almost 75 per cent of the 500 or so seats in the House. In this situation, as Gunnar Myrdal (*Asian Drama*, 1968, p. 288) has pointed out, "the primary aim of other parties" was to "influence groups within the ruling party". To an extent this still applies, but with increasingly less force since the late 1960s. In the general election of 1967 Congress was reduced to 280,[1] or just over half the seats in the Lower House and further disasters followed in the mid-term elections of 1969 (see below).

These bare facts are merely a statistical expression of a situation which can be of great importance for the Left movement in the second most populous country in the world. It is the purpose of this article to say something about how this situation has arisen and what consequences have flowed from it.

After Independence

In the period after 1947 there is no doubt that Congress owed its large degree of support among the electorate partly to its leading role in the Independence struggle and partly to not inconsiderable achievement in its earlier years of office. This achievement included a programme of industrialisation, based on a series of Five-Year Plans, which raised total production over the period 1951-66 by 159 per cent. Soviet aid has been of great assistance in India's efforts to achieve a greater degree of economic independence, especially with the completion of such heavy industrial projects as the Bhilai steel mill.

In agriculture there has been a partially successful land reform directed against semi-feudal landowners, and important successes in the introduction of fertilisers and new types of seed have given rise to talk of a "green revolution". Food grains production has risen very substantially since 1947 and some think, probably rather optimistically, that the days of food shortage may soon be over.

Another important advance since the colonial period has been in democracy. Despite some important limitations, Indian democracy compares favourably with most of its neighbours. So far there has been no resort to the forms of military rule and semi-dictatorship under the guise of "guided democracy" characteristic of other parts of South Asia. There is universal suffrage, regular elections and quite a degree of freedom of speech and assembly. Those bastions of feudal reaction, the so-called "Native States", the British maintained to bolster their rule have been swept away, though the princes were given pensions and privileges in compensation.

A significant achievement in international relations was India's rejection of the imperialist war pacts like SEATO and her adherence to "non-alignment" and to the Panch Shila, or five[2] principles of co-existence, in her relations with China.

The story of Congress rule after 1947 was, however, by no means one of untarnished achievement.

Capitalist Development

The land reform was essentially a capitalist one. According to C. Bettelheim (*India Independent*, 1968, p. 185) the effect of the agrarian laws to eliminate the "middleman" has been as follows:

> "First they have not suppressed big property, but have limited it and have substituted a system of *usus*, *abusus* and *fructus* for a feudal system.
>
> "Secondly, the legislation *has given the richer peasants an opportunity to become landed proprietors* . . . It has paved the way for rural capitalism; the big landowners and the rich peasantry will form a new and dominant class of rural capitalists."

Despite the undoubted accomplishments of the Five Year Plans, "measured against what needs to be done . . . these achievements appear insubstantial" (Myrdal, *loc. cit.*, p. 286). This has been largely a result of the character of Indian planning which

[1] It should be noted that, like certain other countries, India does not practise a system whereby seats allocated are in proportion to votes cast. Thus the 357-371 seats of 1952-67 were obtained on the basis of 45-47 per cent of the total votes cast, whereas the 280 of 1967 corresponded to 39 per cent of the votes. In all elections the British-type "first past the post" electoral system has been to the advantage of Congress.

[2] The five were: Respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty; mutual non-aggression; non-interference in each other's internal affairs; equality and mutual benefit; and peaceful co-existence.

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tends to merely state what is anticipated rather than to lay down targets which enterprises must fulfil. This in turn is a result of the non-Socialist nature of the Indian economy.

The advances in output and national income since 1947 have largely benefited the monopolies such as Tata, Birla, Burn and Dalmia-Jain which play such a large role in the economy. Between 1951 and 1958 these four biggest financial groups increased their percentage of the total capital of private-sector companies from 21.85 to 26. On the other hand "the gains of economic progress, so far as there have been any, have not been of benefit to the mass of very poor people" (Myrdal, *loc. cit.*, p. 286).

Whilst India since 1947 has steered clear of the imperialist war pacts, its financial dependence has been very great. Bettelheim estimates (*loc. cit.*, p. 59) that foreign capital has very nearly equal shares with domestic capital in the Indian economy. Total private foreign investments are nearly Rs. 10 billion, and in certain industries (e.g. oil, rubber, jute) there is almost complete control by foreign capital. An indication of India's financial dependence on imperialism is her foreign debt which grew three times (from 5.04 million Rs. to 15.78 million Rs.) between 1948 and 1959 (Bettelheim, p. 310). India's dependence on the USA especially has been a restriction on her freedom to choose her own policies towards such issues as the Indo-China war.

Crisis in the Mid-1960's

The failures in government policy showed themselves in mounting difficulties which reached the point of crisis in the mid-1960s.

The immediate cause of the crisis was the failure of the backward agrarian system to cope with adverse climatic conditions. From a record level of 150.2 in 1964-5, the index of foodgrains production fell to 120.9 in 1965-6 and 124.6 in 1966-7. The blame for the situation should not be simply laid at the door of nature, however. In fact, the State governments had either neglected the implementation of land reform legislation or had administered it in such a way as to make it ineffective. This is not surprising in view of the power of the rural rich in the Congress party machine, especially at the lower levels. The crisis in agriculture was an indictment of vested interest in the Congress party.

The crisis spread to other sectors of the economy. The index of industrial production, having advanced by 6.3 per cent in 1964, gained only 5.8 per cent in 1965, 2.4 per cent in 1966 and 1.4 per cent in 1967. The charging of high monopoly prices and the official policy of inflation as a method of financing development both worsened the situation by placing restrictions on the size of the home market. Defence expenditure, rising from Rs. 2.9 billion in 1961-2 to Rs. 8.4 billion in 1967-8 added to the the problems as did the growing burden of foreign loan repayments.

In 1966 the US bankers pressurised the government to try to solve its economic problems by devaluing the rupee at a rate of 36½ per cent. The result was disastrous. Not only did India fail to attain her objective of radically improving her balance of trade situation, the greatly increased cost of imports added severely to inflation. Moreover devaluation raised the foreign debt in rupees by 57.5 per cent.

The years of crisis inflicted untold suffering on the people. Even before the crisis two-thirds of the population was officially said to be at starvation level. Now, with the Consumer Price Index rocketing from 152 in 1964 to 217 in October 1967 and the per capita net income (at 1960 prices) falling from Rs. 339.2 in 1964-5 to 313.1 in 1966-7, living standards deteriorated further. Famine in Bihar became world news and in industry real wages were officially said to be below pre-war level. The crisis also ruined the large handloom industry and threw thousands of weavers out of employment. Unemployment rose from 9 million in 1961 to 13 million in 1966.

These were the conditions which formed the background to the wave of militancy which swept the country during this period. Man days lost due to strikes, which had averaged 5.70 million in 1962-4 reached 13.85 million in 1966. Demonstrations, marches on parliament and action against grain hoarders indicated the mood of the people.

General Elections of 1967

A great opportunity for the people to show their anger came with the general elections in 1967 with the results in terms of Congress losses as described above.

Unfortunately no united left existed in 1967 to give the necessary leadership to the movement of the people against Congress. There was a marked tendency for the electors to favour the party which was best placed to defeat the ruling party so that in some cases the right-wing gained and in others the left made important advances. The latter was the case in Kerala where the left presented a united front, but where the left was disunited the right-wing sometimes made big gains.

Left-wing and democratic parties obtained 118 seats in the Lower House to the right-wing's 85. The two Communist parties received almost 9 per cent of the votes, increasing their number of seats in the Lower House from 32 to 44, the Communist Party of India (CPI) from 17 to 25 and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M)) from 15 to 19. The other seats on the left were held by the

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two main Socialist parties, the Samyukta Socialist Party (SSP) and the Praja Socialist Party (PSP) and certain progressive regional parties such as the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam of Tamilnadu and the Bangla Congress of West Bengal. The right-wing group was mainly composed of the party of sections of big business and the former princes, Swatantra, which increased its seats from 22 to 42 and Jana Sangh, the Hindu communal party, increasing from 12 to 34.[3]

The 1967 elections also was the first great breach in the Congress monopoly of power in the States. Anti-Congress governments were set up in 8 of the 17 (West Bengal, Kerala, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Tamilnadu, Haryana and Manipur). In West Bengal and Kerala the United Front ministries were composed of the CPI, CPI(M) and other democratic parties and elements. In Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Punjab the CPI supported non-Congress ministries.

Mid-Term Elections 1969

The Congress leaders, having been used to a monopoly of political power in the 20 years since Independence, took very badly to the existence of non-Congress ministries in half the States, especially where, as in West Bengal, and Kerala, those ministries were led by the Left. The Congress Central Government adopted a hostile attitude to the non-Congress State ministries and began to use its extensive powers over State affairs to achieve their downfall. In West Bengal in particular, where the United Front government gave support to the movements of the masses for rights to which they were legally entitled but which had been denied them by the previous Congress regime (rights such as wage and bonus payments and to land illegally occupied by landlords), a hue and cry was raised by Congress about the "collapse of law and order" although the movements were peaceful.

By 1968 through bribery of members of United Fronts (no Communist could be bought however) and by the contravention of the rights of States laid down in the Constitution, the Central Government had managed to cause the downfall of the ministries of West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Punjab, and the government called a "mini-general election" for February 1969.

The results of this election marked a further stage in the decline in support for the ruling party. Congress was dealt a shattering blow and failed to win a majority in any of the four states.

In West Bengal the result was a triumph for the united Left and democratic front which polled 54 per cent of the vote and won 214 of the 280 seats. Congress won only 55 seats (127 in 1967) and Jana Sangh and Swatantra none (one each in 1967). The largest party was the CPI(M) with 80 seats (up from 43) and the CPI won 30 (previously 16). In votes the CPI(M) total went up from 2,293,000 in 1967 to 2,677,000 in 1969 and the CPI total from 827,000 to 937,000.

In Bihar no Left front could be formed largely because the main Left party the SSP with its anti-Congress obsession attempted to build an "all-in" electoral alliance including *all* non-Congress parties, even Jana Sangh. This was rejected by the CPI and other left parties, so the election became a "free-for-all" in which the vote of all the Left parties (except the CPI which increased from 936,000 or 6.7 per cent of the total votes cast in 1967 to 1,550,000 or 10.3 per cent in 1969) declined. On the other hand Jana Sangh advanced from 10.2 per cent to 15.2 per cent. Bihar was another object lesson in the necessity for Left unity.

In Uttar Pradesh and Punjab, again, no Left front could be formed, in fact in Punjab not even a CPI-CPI(M) agreement could be reached and the CPI(M) made an electoral pact with the Sikh party Akali Dal which was the main beneficiary from Congress's losses. Although the Communist vote remained practically static both parties lost a seat each in Punjab.

In Uttar Pradesh the main party to advance was a new one, the Bharatiya Kranti Dal, representing the richer peasantry, which had not contested in 1967 but which captured 99 seats in 1969. The CPI although increasing its vote from 630,000 to 715,000 lost nine seats and the CPI(M) had its vote cut from 273,000 to 115,000, though it retained its one seat. Jana Sangh also lost ground.

The 1969 elections confirmed the experience of 1967 that government policies were losing Congress electoral support and that if the Left could achieve unity they would be the ones to gain. It also proved, however, that, whereas in 1967 the people were willing to vote for any party which had a chance of ousting Congress, the experience of United Front government from 1967 to 1969 had changed blind anti-Congressism to a more careful consideration of different party policies, and it was where the Left movement had been campaigning longest to put its policy to the masses (i.e. in West Bengal and Bihar) that the best results were achieved. The CPI made a welcome advance in this election, raising its votes total

[3] All these figures tend to obscure marked regional differences in party strength, for whereas the right-wing parties are strong in such states as Rajasthan, Orissa and Gujarat where the former princes are still influential, the Communist Parties have substantial numbers of seats in such State Assemblies as West Bengal (59), Kerala (71) and Bihar (28). Figures as for 1967 elections.

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from 2,613,000 (1969) to 3,414,000, its percentage of the total vote from 5.03 to 6.04 and its seats from 58 to 63. The CPI(M), although it raised its votes tally from 2,878,000 to 3,080,000, its percentage from 5.52 to 5.97 and its seats from 57 to 86, registered all of its advance in West Bengal where its gains made up for losses elsewhere.

Congress After the Elections

The mid-term elections of 1969 brought the strains which had been growing within Congress for some time to near breaking point. The considerable loss of electoral support and the advances made by both Left and Right Wing parties were evidence of the growing mass discontent within the country over the consequences of the failure to radically change Indian society.[4]

The Congress leaders read the signs and they concluded that the ending of their electoral monopoly meant that it would be suicidal to go into the 1972 general elections without allies. But where to find them—the Left or the Right? The Congress Party membership still retains some of its old pre-1947 character of a broad national front ranging from real socialists to the extreme right even though the leadership and basic policy has been a bourgeois one. Consequently, one section of the Party regarded the Left as potential allies, another the Jana Sangh and Swantantra.

"The Syndicate" Attacks

It was the latter section of Congress which controlled the party machine and which was led by such men as Morarji Desai, the then Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister and S. Nijalingappa, the then Congress President. These were two of the key figures in what has come to be popularly known as the "Syndicate", the old guard conservatives who had a firm grip on the Congress organisation. The strategy of the Syndicate was to forge an alliance with Jana Sangh and Swatantra and set up a right wing government in India.

In this strategy the Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, Nehru's daughter, was to be ousted from her post. She had originally, on the death of former Prime Minister Shastri, been a compromise candidate in the faction-ridden Congress, but the party bosses had been dissatisfied with her performance as Prime Minister. To a great extent it was a question of a personal struggle for power but political issues were involved because the Syndicate objected to the closeness of India's relationship with the Soviet Union which developed under Indira Gandhi. (This in turn was not unconnected with the debate within Congress about the degree of State involvement in industrial development since much of the help the USSR has given India has been in developing heavy industry in the public sector). The Prime Minister was accused of surrounding herself with "favourites" of an allegedly pro-Soviet, anti-Western inclination.

Syndicate tactics for easing Indira Gandhi from the Prime Ministership involved, as a first stage, the election of Right-wing Sanjiva Reddy as President of the Republic (the previous President had recently died). As the British "Times" reported on July 10th, 1969, "this would be the first in a series of moves to force her resignation".

Mrs. Gandhi then adopted the tactics which transformed the whole contest. She raised the fight from the plane of the personal-factional to the political by submitting in July 1969 to the Congress Working Committee (CWC) a note advocating radical economic measures including the nationalisation of some of the biggest banks, with a view to winning back mass support for Congress.

Mrs. Ghandi's Moves

The Syndicate, knowing the mass support for socialism in India, could not but endorse the note, but were confident of preventing the implementation of the measures—Congress has a long history of socialist talk and capitalist practice.

What really electrified the political situation in the country was Mrs. Gandhi's next moves. She sacked Desai, symbol of the extreme Right from his post as Finance Minister on the grounds that he would never implement socialist measures, took over the Ministry herself, accepted Desai's resignation from the Cabinet and nationalised the 14 biggest banks in the country by ordinance on July 19th, 1969. These moves were enormously popular. Even the *Times* later admitted (October 19th) that Mrs. Gandhi's popularity became "unrivalled since the nationalisation of the banks".

The CPI organised massive rallies all over India in support of the nationalisation move and urged support for V. V. Giri, former Vice-President, who had decided to stand for the Presidency against Syndicate-man Reddy, in the impending Presidential elections. Reddy had been chosen by the Syndicate-controlled Congress organisation as the official Congress candidate but Mrs. Gandhi demanded a free vote by the electoral college members (from the Houses of Parliament and the State Legislatures).

[4] As Myrdal (*loc. cit.* p. 279) observes: "If the wellsprings of Indian development efforts seem now to be drying up, the explanation must in large part be traced to the inability or unwillingness to reform the social and economic structure of the country".

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Results were declared on August 20th. Giri had won 420,677 votes to Reddy's 405,427. The Syndicate plans had suffered a hard blow.

The Syndicate at first threatened Mrs. Gandhi and her supporters with action for a breach of Congress discipline, but the display of mass support for the Prime Minister's moves outside Parliament, and the obvious overwhelming support she commanded among Congress M.P.'s (it was estimated that 170-180 had voted for Giri) persuaded the Syndicate that the time was hardly opportune for forcing a showdown especially since opportunist elements in the Syndicate camp, seeing the way the wind was blowing, changed sides.

A patched-up "unity resolution" at the CWC meeting on August 25th marked a temporary truce, but during the autumn the cracks began to widen as the two sides manoeuvred to gain the advantage. The tactics of Mrs. Gandhi were to try to remove Nijalingappa, key Syndicate member, from his post as Congress Party President, as a step on the way to wresting control of the Party organisation from the Syndicate. The Syndicate's objective was to try to undermine the Prime Minister's strongest base, in the Parliamentary Party, by winning away a sufficient number of Congress M.P.s to prove that Mrs. Gandhi was dependent for the survival of her government on the votes of the Left. This would enable the Syndicate to attack her as a "tool of the Communists".

The Congress Splits

The impending split was now inevitable and it came at the begining of November 1969. The Congress had split after 84 years of existence. The Prime Minister had hoped that her bid to capture the party machine would be successful and the Syndicate would be left isolated as a small group of four or five men, but in this she underestimated the strength of the Syndicate which retained much of the party machine.

There now followed a period of battle for as many Congress MPs and members as either side could lay its hands on. In the end 111 Congress MPs took their seats on the opposition benches as the Syndicate Congress—officially, the "Congress Party Opposition" (CPO), popularly known as "Cong-O"! When Mrs. Gandhi faced a no-confidence motion on November 17th, 306 MPs, from the Congress and the Left mainly, overwhelmingly outnumbered the 140 supporters of the motion, mainly from the CPO and the Right wing.

On November 23rd Mrs. Gandhi called an All-India Congress Committee (AICC) meeting which she claimed was attended by 441 of the 709 AICC members. But the Prime Minister dismayed the Congress Left at the meeting by bringing the Maharaja of Baroda, leader of the princes' fight for the retention of their state pensions and privileges, on to the AICC. This was one of the numerous indications that the Congress split was not yet a clear left-right cleavage. Further evidence came at the Congress convention in Bombay at the end of December. Although the meeting directed the Government to carry out a new economic programme, including the nationalisation of India's import trade, and passed a resolution asking the Government to place an upper limit on urban property, implement existing land reform legislation by the end of 1970 and abolish the princely purses and privileges during the February Budget session, the response of the leadership was less militant. True enough, Mrs. Gandhi and Home Minister Y. B. Chavan, supported the measures, but the Prime Minister said she was not prepared to take over the import trade or wholesale trade in grain immediately as certain contracts would have to run out first. The clause had to be rephrased to promise that the import trade would be nationalised "expeditiously" in the distant future. The leaders also refused to accept a resolution to amend the Constitution to abolish the fundamental right to own property, saying that the courts had ruled that Parliament had no right to amend this clause. Mrs. Gandhi reiterated her intention to abolish the princely purses but apart from this gave the Congress Left only vague slogans.

The differences within Mrs. Gandhi's camp were reflected in her failure to get unanimous and uncontested elections for the new CWC, 38 candidates having been put up by the various embryonic factions for the ten elected posts.

Attitudes of the Communist Parties

The attitudes of the two Communist Parties to the recent developments in Congress cannot be understood without some discussion of the broader differences between the parties.

These differences have quite a long history and have largely been concerned with the assessment of the role of the Indian bourgeoisie and the Congress Party. In 1934 one of the present CPI(M) leaders, B. T. Ranadive, met with opposition within the CPI over his characterisation of Gandhi as, objectively, an imperialist agent. After 1947, for several years, the Party leaders were disunited in their evaluation of independence and the changes brought by it, one section taking the position that India did not in reality attain independence in 1947.

Party unity was maintained until the early 1960s when General Secretary, Ajoy Ghosh, who had played an important part in preventing a split,

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died. Soon after came the border conflict with China which was accompanied by the exacerbation of the differences within the Party and there followed in 1964 the split, involving a minority of about a third of the Party's National Council, which eventually formed its own party.

The CPI General Secretary, Rajeswara Rao ("New Age", August 31st 1969) has outlined three main points of difference which were at issue in 1964. These were:

1. Whether a revolutionary situation was maturing in 1962-4.
2. The support of the CPI(M) leaders for the Mao Tse-tung stand in the ideological dispute in the international communist movement.
3. The CPI's advocacy of a National Democratic Front as opposed to the CPI(M)'s People's Democratic Front.

Although the CPI(M) today rejects the first two points of disagreement as false, it is true that the public statements of the CPI(M) following the split clearly showed a similarity to many of the positions then taken up by the leadership of the Chinese Party and open opposition to the policy adopted by the international communist conference of 1960. In fact, soon after the 1964 Indian Party split, the CPI(M)'s line found favour with the Chinese Party leadership. This situation has now given way to one of bad relations and the withdrawal of Chinese support in favour of the "Naxalites". This is an extremist group which began to form in the CPI(M) in May 1967 and which eventually broke away to form a separate organisation, the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist). They take their name "Naxalites" from Naxalbarj, a settlement in West Bengal where they led a peasant revolt. This was widely reported by the Chinese press and radio which spoke of it in a favourable way.

The Naxalites

The Naxalites reject all agreements with other political parties as unprincipled compromises and speak of the CPI and CPI(M) involvement in Indian parliaments in the States and in Delhi as "bourgeois parliamentarism". They also substitute the advanced revolutionary vanguard for the masses and advocate premature insurrections. They take up a position which virtually denies the role of the working class in the revolution under the cover of slogans such as "peasants' people's war", "world villages encircling the world cities and liberating them", and "national liberation revolutions playing the decisive role in defeating world imperialism and achieving world socialist revolution". Finally, the extremists deny the existence of a world communist movement (excepting one or two Communist Parties) since they allege, in the face of the real facts, that the majority of Parties have succumbed to revisionist leadership and that the Soviet Union, in particular, has become an ally of imperialism.

This extremist line, as in other parts of the world, has an attraction for sections of lower middle-class youth and students with militant sentiments, and for some desperately poor peasants.

Attitude to Congress

There can be no doubt, that although the relationship between the CPI(M) and the Chinese Party has changed with the passage of time, the third point in Rajeswara Rao's analysis is of the greatest importance and needs fuller discussion.

The CPI characterises the state in India as "the organ of the national bourgeoisie as a whole, in which the big bourgeoisie holds powerful influence. This class rule has strong links with the landlords. These factors give rise to reactionary pulls on the state power". The CPI states that the monopoly bourgeoisie has not yet established its leadership of the state and the Congress, but that it is fighting to do so and in the meantime exerts powerful (though not leading) influence in both.

The CPI considers that differentiation in the bourgeoisie can be hastened by a stronger and more united mass movement and its impact on the ruling party. Its policy is to find allies among the representatives of the "non-big" (i.e. non-monopolist) bourgeoisie who are considered to exist in Congress and the Government and to form a National Democratic Front with these and other left and democratic forces in which there will not be exclusive leadership of either the revolutionary party of the proletariat or of the "non-big" bourgeoisie.

The attitude of the CPI to the Congress split is that although it is not yet a clear-cut division between progressives and reactionaries, it is the *beginning* of such a differentiation. For this reason the CPI gives tactical support to the Indira Gandhi section even though it contains "vacillating and even reactionary sections". The intention of the CPI is to use its influence to strengthen the progressive trend in the Indira Gandhi camp, a trend which is engaged in a struggle to reverse the shift to the Right which in previous years had become the order of the day in Congress and the government.

The CPI(M), however, regards India as a "bourgeois-landlord state *headed* by the big bourgeoisie". Its estimate of Congress is that it represents essentially the three main exploiting

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classes of Indian society, the big (monopolist) bourgeoisie, the "non-big" bourgeoisie and the landlords.

Estimations of the Congress Split

The CPI(M) considers that a split in the "conflicting combine" is inevitable since the "non-big" bourgeoisie is "objectively interested in the accomplishment of the principal tasks of the anti-feudal and anti-imperialist revolution". The Party considers that, with the growing crisis in India due to the following of the capitalist path of development and the growth of the movement of the masses against this path, the "non-big" bourgeoisie will be compelled to "come into opposition with state power and can find a place in the people's democratic front", though under "proletarian hegemony". But although "every effort must be made to win them to the democratic front", the CPI(M) considers that the "non-big" bourgeoisie "are still sharing state power along with the big bourgeoisie and entertain high hopes of advancing under the same regime".

Consequently the CPI(M) does not see the present split in Congress as, at root, one between a monopolist and a non-monopolist section but as two variants of "the same old bourgeois-landlord class line", in other words as "two conflicting tactical lines" which both have the aim of securing stability for their class rule. Thus although they consider one Congress party to be relatively progressive and the other reactionary and although they are prepared to give a degree of support to the Indira Gandhi group as a measure against the Syndicate-Swatantra-Sangh axis, their estimate of the relative closeness of the two positions is shown in their labelling them as "Syndicate" and "Indicate".

The unenthusiastic CPI(M) view of the split is in contrast to that of the CPI which considers that the Congress rift has presented the democratic movement in India with the opportunity "to broaden its base and for the masses to forge ahead in their struggle for democracy and social progress". (Resolution of the National Council of the CPI, November 24th, 1969). The CPI has also stated that, although the CPI(M) envisaged sections of the small and medium bourgeoisie breaking away and coming out in opposition to the state power, it never considered that the differentiation could develop in the government with the central government itself taking anti-monopoly measures as it has done over the banks.

Unstable Situation

The CPI considers that to reduce the difference between the two Congress parties to one of merely "two conflicting tactical lines" is to ignore the possibilities which the new situation presents. Thus, the move of Congress government to the Right, which had in earlier years been pronounced, has been more or less halted. In addition, a number of significant measures which are in the interests of the masses have been wrested from the government. In fact on May 18th 1970, the ruling Congress Party acted against India's former princes when the Home Minister introduced a Bill to abolish the former Rajahs' privileges and privy purses. This will save the nation £2.5m a year and will also abolish certain tax and duty concessions.

On the other hand, the CPI has no illusions but that the present situation is a highly unstable one, with the Indira Gandhi government resisting pressure from the Left and with reactionaries entrenched in the ruling Congress sabotaging progressive changes. An example came in April when a government-supported bill to abolish the privileges of the remaining members of the old Indian Civil Service was defeated when several ruling Congress MPs conveniently failed to show up in Parliament for the crucial division.

The CPI considers that the Indira Gandhi government is too weak to fight the reactionary combine of the Syndicate-Jana-Sangh-Swatantra axis and has said that its support for the government against the Rightist bid for power does not imply the Party's general support. Whether to support or oppose the government is decided from the standpoint of the interests of the people and each issue is to be judged on its merits.

The CPI has taken the position that no basic changes in the structure of Indian society can be expected from the present government which is even incapable of eliminating the Rightist threat. The present Indira Gandhi government which is vulnerable to pressures both from the Left and the Right is considered to be only a temporary phase in a rapidly developing situation. It is expected that it will be replaced either by a government of Left and democratic unity or by a Rightist coalition.

The Prospects for India

The situation in India presents for the Left both a big challenge and new opportunities which did not exist previously. The policy of leaving the rural social structure basically untouched and strengthening the monopoly hold over the economy, which Congress governments have been pursuing, has brought India to an economic and social-political crisis. The anti-Congress movements of millions of Indians and the gains of Left and democratic parties in the recent period have brought the Indian bourgeoisie to the pre-

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sent crisis. Whether or not the Left can turn the situation further in its favour depends very largely on the further growth in strength of the Left, and the greatest obstacle to such a growth is disunity.

One of the threats to the unity of the masses is communalism. The ruling class has always tried to split the movements against them by playing on all kinds of differences and in India one of the differences which has been exploited most is between Hindu and Muslim.

Between September 18th to 26th September 1969, in Ahmedabad, there occurred the worst communal riot since the carnage of the days of Partition. No-one knows the correct number killed, because the official figure of 1,000 is certainly an underestimate, but it is known that more than 50,000 were made homeless, especially among the minority community.

Further communal rioting has taken place in Maharashtra state during May 1970 and the authorities themselves have begun to speak out openly against the role played by communalist parties. On May 14th Mrs. Gandhi bitterly attacked the leader of Jana Sangh, A. B. Vajpayee, for fomenting communal hatred and preaching "naked fascism".

Communalism continues to present grave dangers to working class unity and is an important weapon in the hands of reaction. It is also notable how often these communal riots are used as an excuse to murder working class leaders and recent events have been no exception.

The biggest weakness and problem is the disunity of the Left forces. This is made even more acute by the divisions between Indian communists themselves, not only because there exist different Communist parties, but because the political differences between them are now very sharp and have affected the mass organisations of workers and peasants.

Kerala

The dangers of disunity among the forces opposing reaction have also manifested themselves in the state of Kerala. Here, a United Front government was formed after the 1967 elections with a huge majority in the State Assembly. The CPI(M) was the largest party with 50 seats in an Assembly of 116. The CPI had 21 seats and a number of other Left parties participated in the United Front. Divisions soon manifested themselves, however, and the United Front government ended in October 1969 with the resignation of CPI(M) Chief Minister E. M. S. Namboodiripad.

The CPI has declared that the break-up of the Kerala Ministry was due to the CPI(M) policy of "big-party bossism", disruptive behaviour and sectarian policies. It emphasises that the CPI(M) has indulged in "ultra-revolutionary phraseology" about the defects of the Constitution and about the people's struggles, denouncing the other parties as revisionist, whilst failing to make a serious attempt to implement "even the minimum programme of the Front".

In particular it points out that the CPI(M) Minister in charge of a comprehensive amending Bill to change the Land Reforms Act of 1964 was responsible for inexcusable delay in preparing the Bill which was placed before the Assembly only in August 1969. The CPI also states that the CPI(M) gave concessions to vested interests in Kerala such as transport operators and wholesale food grain dealers. But the key charge is that the CPI(M) used their hold over the administrative machine of the State to further their party interests and subjugate the other United Front partners.

The CPI states that after the 1969 mid-term elections Namboodiripad came out with a statement that the CPI(M) had to work for a new realignment of political parties for the 1972 elections when the CPI(M) would have to aim at a single party majority for itself in Kerala. It is this, the CPI say, which has been behind the "big party bossism" by the CPI(M) in Kerala and its "treating of the allies of the working class as enemies to be exposed and fought first".

N. K. Krishnan (CPI) in *New Age*, November 9th, 1969 commented:

> "there is nothing in common between fraternal criticism and the Left-sectarian line of directing the main fire against the partners of the United Front in the name of fighting 'revisionism' and 'bourgeois reformism'."

The CPI declared last autumn that the CPI(M) leaders were trying to use the split in the Congress Party, not to strengthen the existing United Fronts and extend them on to an all-India level, but to press forward their one-party domination in the then existing United Fronts of Kerala and West Bengal. The CPI considered ominous the resolution of the Central Committee of the CPI(M) passed at its October 1969 session which spoke of splits in the United Fronts being inevitable and which forecast that future United Fronts would be of a different form. The CPI has pointed out that the results of these theories of the inevitability of splits and the polarisation between "bourgeois and revisionists" on the one hand and "the revolutionary forces" on the other could lead to the same type of disastrous consequences which the similar Maoist theses led to in the international communist movement.

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Fortunately, the fall of the Kerala United Front Ministry was not followed by Presidential rule. On November 1st a new United Front ministry was sworn in with C. Achutha Menon (CPI) as Chief Minister. However, the strongest party in the Assembly, the CPI(M) immediately called for "total opposition" to the new government, proclaimed November 1st as "betrayed day" and declared its intention to "rouse public opinion to make it impossible for this Government to continue". Demonstrations were mounted against the Government by the CPI(M) but they failed in their objective.

The new United Front Ministry already has a number of progressive measures to its credit. An ordinance for the payment of gratuities by employers to workers who retire, resign or are dismissed took effect from December 10th. Another ordinance ensuring proper rates of pay for agricultural workers awaits the concurrence of the Centre and an agreement was signed on November 30th between the Kerala government and the Food Corporation of India to hand over to the latter wholesale distribution of food grains in the state. *Within 31 days of assuming office the new Government distributed permanent title deeds for land to over 25,000 families.* Moreover strong measures have been taken to evict rich landlords from government land they have been occupying without authorisation. A "Trade Union Recognition Ordinance" is also awaiting ratification by Centre. Most important of all, the Kerala Land Reforms (amendment) Act of January 1st, 1970 is the most radical land reform implemented anywhere in India and a model for future legislation.

The CPI considers it important that the achievements of the present Kerala government be popularised throughout India to help restore the people's faith in the Left and democratic united front where it has been shaken by the disruptive line of the CPI(M).

West Bengal

This is a matter of particular concern after recent events in the other state where a United Front existed, West Bengal. The greatest problem here has been frequent violent clashes between groups of CPI(M) supporters and those of the other parties in the United Front. The situation was aggravated by the failure of the CPI(M) Home Minister, Jyoti Basu, to maintain law and order. In fact there are indications that he used his position in a biased manner in order to assist the CPI(M) at the expense of other United Front parties. The CPI has been among the critics of the attitude and behaviour of the CPI(M) towards its colleagues in the Front. *New Age* (March 22nd, 1970) charged the CPI(M) of "misusing the police portfolio to behead other partners of the Front, disrupt their mass following and into the bargain create a general condition of insecurity in the entire state". In the CPI it is felt that these disruptive policies of the CPI(M) are a direct result of the sectarian position it has taken up in which it sees itself as the only main fighter against the supposed "revisionism" of other Left parties.

In the face of these difficulties, the Chief Minister of West Bengal, Ajoy Mukherjee, announced his intention to resign on March 8th and submitted his official letter of resignation on March 16th whereupon the CPI(M) tried to set up a "mini-government", based on itself with whatever allies it could secure, but without the majority of the United Front. To bring pressure to bear on the Governor and make him agree to such a proposal the CPI(M) called a general strike on March 17th, 1970. There was considerable opposition to this strike call from the supporters of the other parties, and sharp clashes took place. *New Age* (March 22nd, 1970) charged that "Armed gangs of the CPI(M) inspired by the campaign of hatred unleashed by its leaders, attacked the workers to enforce the strike call, killing at least 27 and injuring over 200".

The Governor refused to accept the CPI(M) "minifront Government" proposal, and accordingly the central Government suspended the State Assembly on 19th March, 1970 and introduced President's rule.

The CPI has put forward proposals to revive the 14-party United Front on a new basis and for its restoration to power again with Ajoy Mukherhee as Chief Minister and by alloting the home portfolio to a party other than the CPI(M). Unfortunately, a wave of acts of violence and terror carried out by groups of Naxalites in Calcutta has given the opportunity for reaction to carry out a programme of repression and reprisals.

This situation has been a factor behind recent suggestions made by General K. M. Cariappa, the former Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army, that the constitution should be scrapped and the present Administration replaced with Army rule. Another part of the background to these calls has been the unprincipled behaviour of Congress and other politicians in the States in the recent period of the decline in Congress monopoly of power. State governments have collapsed on innumerable occasions as Congressmen and others, seeking personal power and gain, have neglected election pledges and defected to the opposition. All this has given Cariappa the opportunity to demand Army rule in "politically unstable states", the dissolution of Parliament and

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the assumption of power at the Centre by the President with "the backing of the Army and a group of eminent advisers" (*Times,* 18th May).

Conclusion

India faces a very difficult and complex situation. The split in the Congress, and the manoeuvres on the Right, emphasise the need for the utmost unity of the Left forces in order to achieve a progressive orientation for the country as a whole. The split in the Communist Party, however, with both the CPI and the CPI(M) enjoying a mass following of millions of supporters[5] and voters (apart from the further breakaway of the Naxalites), and in particular the sectarian and adventurist policy of the CPI(M), have brought about deep divisions on the Left precisely at a time when the greatest unity is required. These divisions can only play into the hands of reaction.

A further recent blow to left unity has been the decision of the CPI(M) to form a separate trade union organisation. The existing All-India Trade Union Congress which, for many years, has organised Indian workers and conducted many major class battles, has up to now been able to avoid the worst consequences of the split between the CPI and the CPI(M). Leaders and members of both parties have worked within the one trade union body although, naturally enough, there have been difficulties. Whatever may be the views concerning the politics of the two different parties there is no doubt that the splitting of this mass organisation, can only increase the difficulties on the Left, facilitate the attacks of the employers and give pleasure to all on the right who want to use the present situation for further attacks on the democratic rights of the people.

A disunited Left could be faced with a regrouping of forces on the right—Syndicate, Jana Sangh, Swatantra—backed by the military. The collapse of the centre (Congress Party) would not automatically mean a turn of India to the Left. If the Left is divided and with no agreed common position, the result could be a move to the right. As the National Council of the CPI (May 17th) has said, "the question of power at the Centre is already on he agenda". How this question is answered will have important consequences for the situation in the rest of Asia and therefore for world politics.

[5] A welcome indication of the advance the CPI has registered over the recent period was the growth in Party membership reported after the 1970 membership enrolment Campaign which ended on January 31st. In 1968 CPI membership stood at 135,212. The 1970 figure is 243,238, an 80 per cent increase. Membership is highest in Bihar (48,580), Andhra (37,043), Kerala (33,000) and West Bengal (28,856).

(completed from page 250)

those in the other set induce human beings to unite for attaining common ends by common effort". These can lead to a positive unity in "struggle, and . . . the desire of unity and mutual sympathy". (*Ibid.*, p. 22).

The importance of Kropotkin's analysis is that, in place of "original sin" or "aggression", he shows that in nature and in man, there are sometimes conflicting tendencies of self versus society, but that these can be reconciled, in struggle for mutual interests. If we delve into our pre-human heritage, we find instinctive reasons both for individualistic and for socially-orientated behaviour, and there is therefore no basis for the argument that man's satisfaction must be primarily "individualistic".

Kropotkin in his *Ethics* by no means glosses over the importance of the evolution of society from tribalism to modern class society. He notes that gradually "each group evolves its own morality" (*Ibid.*, p. 66) including "the division of the population into classes" (p. 60). The development of class morality, and of religious moralities linked with the class struggle, are amply illustrated by references to John Ball, Wycliffe, John Huss, the Anabaptists, the Peasant War in Germany etc.

While Kropotkin parts company with Marxists because he "cannot support the necessity of . . . the State" (*Ibid.*, p. 275), his study of a scientific basis of ethics is, in the main, unaffected by this, and, in my view, is at least one work by an Anarchist that deserves an honoured place on every Marxist bookshelf.

Is it not time for somebody to reprint it?

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Discussion Contributions on:

Socialism, Democracy and the One-Party System

Monty Johnstone Part One

On no question are there such sharp divergences of opinion and such passionate debate both between Marxists and non-Marxists, and among Marxists themselves, as on the nature of democracy under Socialism. Above all this revolves around the issue of the one-party system, the role of the Communist Party and the right of opposition of other parties, both Socialist, non-Socialist and anti-Socialist.

A great obstacle to Communist growth and to Communist unity with other Socialist forces in Western countries has been, and to no small extent remains, the fear that we aim to establish a state in which the ruling party or "bloc" could not be constitutionally removed. Many are afraid that, whatever may be Communist tactics under capitalism, we envisage the suppression under Socialism of all political opposition, hence (in their view) effectively depriving the people of a free choice of government.

This conception, although widely promoted by the opponents of Communism, cannot simply be dismissed as an arbitrary capitalist invention. As Friedl Fürnberg, Secretary of the Communist Party of Austria, has written, it owes "its origin to the specific circumstances of the rise and development of the first Socialist country—the Soviet Union—and it gained currency and persists with remarkable tenacity to this day, because, for a time, the Communist Parties themselves believed that the dictatorship of the proletariat, unlike bourgeois democracy, could be effected only through one-party rule."[1] Broadly speaking it reflects the experience not only of the Soviet Union but also of those Socialist states where non-Communist political parties exist but may only function within the framework of a national front, in which the leadership of the Communist Party is accepted and there are no party contests at elections.

However, particularly since 1956 with the revelations of undemocratic practices, crimes and repressions in some Socialist states, many Communist Parties, especially in countries with strong democratic traditions, have concerned themselves with the question of safeguards against the erosion of Socialist democracy by the concentration of uncontrolled power in the hands of a small group of Communist Party leaders. This is reflected, for example, in the goal of the Italian Communist Party of "a pluralistic Socialist society" which "is not centralised, not controlled by bureaucracy and not identified with the power of a single party."[2] It finds its expression also in our own Communist Party's programme, *The British Road to Socialism.* Here the aim is set out of a Socialist democracy where "democratically organised political parties, including those hostile to Socialism, would have the right to maintain their organisation, publications and propaganda, and to contest elections."[3]

In the past two years, strong attacks have appeared in the press of the Soviet Union and the German Democratic Republic, in particular, against pluralism and the most "harmful" idea of "revisionist ideologists" that "the Socialist state should guarantee freedom of expression to minority interests and views."[4] It is asserted that "behind the hypocritical arguments about a multi-party system and parliamentary opposition and under cover of demagogic slogans about 'democratic, humane Socialism', the

[1] F. Fürnberg, "The Multi-Party System under Capitalism and Socialism", in *World Marxist Review* (Prague), November, 1964.

[2] Theses of the 12th Congress of the Italian Communist Party, in *Marxism Today* (London), April, 1969, p. 120.

[3] *The British Road to Socialism* (London, 1968), p. 52.

[4] Dieter Uhlig, "The Dictatorship of the Proletariat and Petty Bourgeois Democratism", in *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* (Berlin), No. 2, 1969, p. 143. At the October 1968 Central Committee Plenum of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany, Central Committee Secretary Kurt Hager devoted a section of his report to "Pluralism—a Means of Diversion" (*Neues Deutschland*, October 29th, 1968), a theme which was briefly taken up by Walter Ulbricht at the International Meeting of Communist and Workers' Parties in Moscow in 1969. (Official Report, pp. 219-220.)

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right wing revisionists encroach on the 'holy of holies' of Marxist-Leninist teaching—the historical necessity for the dictatorship of the proletariat, the Socialist state and the leading role of the Communist and Workers' Parties."[5]

In these two articles it is intended to examine the views of Marx, Engels and Lenin, on parties and democracy under Socialism, including the circumstances under which a one-party system emerged in the U.S.S.R.[6]

Marxist View of Parties

The theoretical basis for the identification of Socialism with a one-party state was first provided by Stalin, who was wont to present the latter not only as necessary in the particular circumstances prevailing in the Soviet Union but also as implicit in a classless society. "A party is part of a class, its most advanced part," he said in 1936. "Several parties, and, consequently, freedom for parties, can exist only in a society in which there are antagonistic classes whose interests are mutually hostile and irreconcilable."[7] The whole argument, which was for many years propagated through the international Communist movement as a fundamental cannon of Marxism, is a false one. By crudely oversimplifying Marx' and Engels' conception of political parties, Stalin concocted a theory derived from the kind of economic determinism which led Marx to exclaim in relation to the French "Marxists" of the late seventies: "All I know is that I am not a Marxist."[8]

Though Marx and Engels never set out a finished theory of political parties, the elements of such a theory—the creative development of which has been neglected by Marxists for far too long—can be found in their works. Their starting point was their belief that political conflicts can *ultimately* be traced back "to the struggles between the interests of existing social classes and fractions of classes created by the economic development." Hence Engels saw parties as "the more or less adequate political expression of these same classes and fractions of classes."[9]

Engels' formulation contrasts with Stalin's in two important respects. Firstly, it relates parties not only to classes but also to fractions of classes, thereby allowing for the fact that classes are not homogeneous. Thus different sections of one and the same class may, and usually do, see their interests expressed by different parties. This certainly does not suggest that different non-antagonistic classes, like workers and peasants in a Socialist society, must *necessarily* be represented exclusively by one and the same party. Secondly, Engels is less categorical, adding the qualification "more or less adequate."

Nonetheless, Engels tends here to convey a conception of political parties that is oversimplified when compared with the subtlety and total lack of dogmatic preconceptions with which Marx and he dealt with parties in their historical and journalistic writings. Largely responsible for this flexibility was the "relative independence" that they attributed to ideological factors.[10] "The economic situation is the basis," Engels wrote to Bloch in 1890, "but the various elements of the superstructure—political forms of the class struggle and its results . . . —also exercise their influence upon the course of the historical struggles and in many cases predominate in determining their *form*."[11]

In *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, which he wrote in 1851-52, Marx made it clear that he did not consider that every party struggle must necessarily, even indirectly, reflect conflicting economic interests. Thus he saw exclusively "ideological" factors as the *raison d'être* of the "republican faction of the bourgeoisie"[12], which in 1848 stood in opposition to the bourgeois royalists in the Party of Order. The former was *not* held together "by great common interests and marked off by specific conditions of production," he wrote. "It was a coterie of republican-minded bourgeois—writers, lawyers, officers and officials—that owed its influence to the personal antipathies of the country against (King) Louis Philippe, to memories of the old republic, to the republican faith of a number of enthusiasts, above all, however, to *French nationalism*."[13] Marx represented the economic policies of this bourgeois party as flowing from its class position, whilst not attempting to find in its members any separate economic characteristic to account for their preference for "a republican instead of a monarchist form of bourgeois rule and, above all, the lion's share of this rule."[14] The latter phrase implicitly attributes to this party

[5] F. Kalinychev and E. Kuzmin, "Socialist Democracy and Pure Democracy", in *Soviet News* (London), March 11th, 1969, p. 101.

[6] No attempt will be made to extend the theme to include a critique of multi-party and one-party systems under capitalism, nor to deal with the problem in relation to emergent countries.

[7] J. Stalin, *Leninism* (Allen & Unwin edition, London, 1940), p. 579.

[8] F. Engels to C. Schmidt, August 5th 1890, *Selected Correspondence* (Moscow-London, 1956), hereafter *Sel. Cor.*, p. 496.

[9] F. Engels, Introduction to K. Marx, *The Class Struggles in France— 1848-1850*, *Selected Works* (Moscow-London, 1950), hereafter *S.W.*, I, p. 110.

[10] F. Engels to C. Schmidt, October 27th 1890, *Sel. Cor.*, pp. 503-505 .

[11] F. Engels to J. Bloch, September 21st-22nd, 1890, *ibid.*, p. 498. Emphasis in original.

[12] *S.W.*, I, p. 233.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 234. Emphasis in original.

[14] *Ibid.*

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a concern with power for its own sake, which they were on numerous occasions to point to as an element in politics.

Writing in 1857 of the British political scene, Marx said that the Peelites, who had for a decade played a certain role as a parliamentary party, "did not represent a class or parts of a class."[15] Engels, more than three decades later saw "very varied" class elements making up the rising German Centre Party, based on the anti-Prussian regional particularism of the Catholic areas.[16]

Although regarding the working class as potentially the most homogeneous class, Marx was very conscious that "the stage of development reached by different sections of the workers in the same country . . . necessarily varies very much, the actual movement necessarily expresses itself in very diverse theoretical forms."[17] Hence, Engels told Bebel in 1873, "the 'solidarity of the proletariat' is everywhere realised in different party groupings, which carry on life-and-death feuds with one another."[18]

Marx and Engels and Democracy

Throughout the whole of their political lives Marx and Engels were deeply concerned with winning "the battle for democracy."[19] Marx entered the political arena as a revolutionary democrat opposing the Prussian monarchy and its bureaucracy and striving for representative institutions through which the sovereignty of the people could be realised. His first articles in 1842 were on the freedom of the press, which he considered to be a prime condition for free political development. He condemned censorship as "a law of suspicion against freedom". It rested, he wrote, "on the principle that 'the end justifies the means.' But an end which has need of unholy means is not a holy end." Lack of freedom, he argued, was "the really deadly danger for man. . . . You cannot enjoy the advantages of a free press without tolerating its inconveniences. You cannot pick the rose without its thorns."[20] He urged that the popular press should be allowed to develop in the shape of different independent organs. "It is above all necessary," he wrote, "not to issue any instructions to it from outside."[21]

Marx did not abandon these deeply democratic precepts when he developed from a revolutionary democrat to a Communist, a transition that he was already beginning the next year with his essay *On the Jewish Question*, in which he exposed the limitations of bourgeois democracy. Rather he envisaged their extension and combination with the social and economic freedom that could only be obtained by a change in the class basis of society. By taking the ownership and control of the productive forces out of the hands of a small exploiting class and placing them in the hands of a democratically run society, Socialism would secure freedom for man as a producer and a human being as well as legal and constitutional freedoms for him as a citizen. It would provide the basis for ending his alienation from the products of his creative labour and from effective control of society.

The League of Communists that they joined in 1847 made it clear that its members were "not among those Communists who are out to destroy personal liberty, who wish to turn the world into one huge barrack or a gigantic workhouse." In a declaration of policy, its organ, the *Kommunistische Zeitschrift* (Communist Journal) of September 1847 went on: "There certainly are some Communists who, with an easy conscience, refuse to countenance personal liberty and would like to shuffle it out of the world because they consider that it is a hindrance to complete harmony. But we have no desire to exchange freedom for equality. We are convinced . . . that in no social order will personal freedom be so assured as in a society based upon communal ownership." It was necessary to "work in order to establish a democratic state wherein each party would be able by word or in writing to win a majority over to its ideas."[22]

The Dictatorship of the Proletariat

Marx and Engels saw the working class movement as "the self-conscious, independent movement of the immense majority, in the interest of the immense majority."[23] This was reflected in the thoroughly democratic character that they ascribed to the dictatorship of the proletariat, which they believed had to replace the bourgeois state. It meant that the working class would use governmental measures "forcibly to speed up the process of transformation of the economic conditions on which the class struggle and the existence of classes rests."[24]

[15] K. Marx, "The Result of the Elections", in *New York Daily Tribune*, April 22nd, 1857.

[16] K. Marx and F. Engels, *Werke* (Berlin, 1956-68), 21, p. 461; 22, p. 8.

[17] K. Marx to F. Engels, March 5th, 1869, *Sel. Cor.*, p. 265.

[18] F. Engels to A. Bebel, June 20th, 1873, *ibid.*, p. 347.

[19] *Communist Manifesto.*, *S.W.*, I, p. 50.

[20] *Werke*, I, pp. 57, 60.

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 155.

[22] D. Ryazanoff, Editor, *The Communist Manifesto of K. Marx and F. Engels* (London, 1930), Appendix E, p. 292.

[23] *Communist Manifesto*, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

[24] K. Marx, Marginal Notes on Bakunin's *Statism and Anarchy* (1874-75), *Werke*, 18, p. 630. For a fuller exposition of what the founders of Marxism understood by the dictatorship of the proletariat, see Jack Cohen, "The Dictatorship of the Proletariat as seen by Marx, Engels and Lenin", in *Marxism Today*, November, 1969, pp. 326-338. See also H. Draper, "Marx and the Dictator-

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There can be no justification for Mr. Richard Crossman's statement that Marx envisaged that this "period of proletarian dictatorship would be no more controlled by all the proletariat than democracy was controlled by all the bourgoisie" but that it would be managed "by a trained élite of revolutionary Marxists . . . in the interests of the proletariat."[25] In fact the founders of scientific Socialism strongly criticised such views, which were put forward in the nineteenth century by Auguste Blanqui and his followers. The latter favoured a revolutionary élite taking power and concentrating it in its own hands until such a time as the masses, stultified by centuries of deception and oppression, could be educated to a point where they themselves came to understand their own best interests. "From Blanqui's conception of every revolution as the *coup de main* of a small revolutionary minority," wrote Engels in 1874, "follows of itself the necessity of a dictatorship after it succeeds: the dictatorship, of course, not of the whole revolutionary class, the proletariat, but of the small number of those who carried out the *coup* and who are themselves already in advance organised under the dictatorship of one or a few individuals."[26]

Nowhere did Marx or Engels suggest that the dictatorship of the proletariat should take the form of a one-party state. In fact, the Paris Commune, which Marx described as "the conquest of political power of the working classes"[27] and Engels as "the dictatorship of the proletariat"[28], was certainly not one. It was divided into a Blanquist majority and a mainly Proudhonist minority, with various political groups like the middle class Union Républicaine functioning freely. Despite their precarious position Paris' new rulers allowed the bourgeois supporters inside Paris of the counter-revolutionary Versailles government, which was preparing their violent destruction, to stand in the elections to the Council of the Commune, in which they won 15 out of the 80 seats. Not till two weeks after the Versailles troops started attacking the outskirts of Paris and bombarding the city did the Commune begin to suspend hostile papers,[29] a measure that Marx considered fully justified as a *wartime* measure. "With the savage warfare of Versailles outside, and its attempts at corruption and conspiracy inside Paris," he wrote, "would the Commune not have shamefully betrayed its trust by affecting to keep up all the decencies and appearances of liberalism *as in a time of profound peace*?"[30] With these civil war conditions in mind, Engels asked: "Would the Commune have lasted a single day if it had not made use of this authority of the armed people against the bourgeois? Should we not, on the contrary, reproach it for not having used it freely enough?"[31]

However, in his vindication of the Commune in his *Civil War in France*, Marx placed his greatest emphasis on the creative initiative that it released among the masses and on the "basis of really democratic institutions" with which it had supplied France. [32] He attached special importance to the fact that the Commune "did not pretend to infallibility, the invariable attribute of all governments of the old stamp", but "published its doings and sayings" and "initiated the public into all its shortcomings."[33] He had long considered that "the general spirit of bureaucracy is *secrecy*, mystery preserved internally by hierarchism, externally by acting as a closed corporation. The conduct of state affairs in the open . . . hence appears to the bureaucracy as *treason* against its mystery."[34] Engels, in his turn, stressed the Commune's anti-bureaucratic measures to "safeguard itself against its own deputies and officials", all of whom were elected by universal suffrage, "by declaring them all, without exception, subject to recall at any moment."[35]

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ship of the Proletariat" in *Cahiers de l'Institut de Science Economique Appliquée*, Série S, *Etudes de Marxologie*, No. 6 (Paris, 1962), pp. 5-73. No attempt is made here to discuss this concept except in relation to the specific theme of the article.

[25] R. H. S. Crossman, *Government and the Governed* (London, 1969), p. 229.

[26] F. Engels, *The Programme of the Blanquist Communard Refugees*, *Werke*, 18, p. 529. A number of writers, including Mr. George Lichtheim, one of the most serious contemporary bourgeois writers on Marxist theory, have seen Marx' and Engels' March 1850 *Address to the Central Committee of the Communist League* (*S.W.*, I, pp. 89-108) as representing a "Jacobin-Blanquist aberration" on Marx's part. (G. Lichtheim, *Marxism*, London, 1961, pp. 124-5). I have attempted to show that this is incorrect in my essay "Marx and Engels and the Concept of the Party" in *Socialist Register*—1967 (London), pp. 127-8.

[27] K. Marx's speech at dinner for delegates at London Conference of First International, 1871, in M. Molnar, *Le Déclin de la Première Internationale* (Geneva, 1963), p. 238.

[28] F. Engels, Introduction (1891) to K. Marx, *The Civil War in France*, *S.W.*, I, p. 440.

[29] See F. Jellinek, *The Paris Commune of 1871* (London, 1937), pp. 227, 295.

[30] K. Marx, *Civil War in France*, *op. cit.*, p. 478. My emphasis.

[31] F. Engels, *On Authority* (1873), *S.W.*, I, p. 578.

[32] *S.W.*, I, p. 473.

[33] *Ibid.*, p. 479.

[34] K. Marx, *From the Critique of Hegel's "Philosophy of Law"* (*Staatsrecht*), 1843, *Werke*, I, p. 249. Emphasis in original.

[35] *S.W.*, I, p. 438. See, also, F. Engels to A. Bebel, March 18th-28th, 1875: "The first condition of all freedom (is) that all officials should be responsible for their official acts to every citizen before the ordinary courts and according to common law". (*Sel. Cor.*, p. 356.)

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Role of Communist Leadership

After the crushing of the Commune, Marx and Engels stepped up their call for building independent working class parties to provide the conscious leadership and direction that had been lacking in Paris. However the Communists' claim to leadership was based on possessing a greater theoretical understanding than the mass of the working class, as the *Communist Manifesto* had already argued, making it clear that they had no intention of trying to "shape and mould the proletarian movement" by imposing their own particular views on it.[36] Marx relied, as Engels pointed out in his 1890 preface, "for the ultimate triumph of the ideas set forth in the *Manifesto* solely and exclusively upon the intellectual development of the working class, as it necessarily had to ensue from united action and discussion."[37]

This was the way that the founders of Marxism believed the working class would acquire a growing awareness of "its own life situation," which demanded a fundamental transformation of capitalist society as a whole. This is what they had in mind when they wrote in 1844 in their *Holy Family:* "The question is not what this or that proletarian, or even the whole of the proletariat at the moment *considers* as its aim. The question is *what the proletariat is*, and what, consequent on that *being*, it will be compelled to do."[38] The "compulsion" in question was not seen as an external one but as a logical one, which in the long run would assert itself in the minds of the majority of workers.

This quotation is, however, not infrequently torn out of its context by academic opponents of Marxism in order to impute to Marx some sort of teleology that he would himself have dismissed as dangerous metaphysical nonsense. Thus Professor George Catlin, in his *History of the Political Philosophers*, by a combination of mistranslation and the total omission of the crucial phrase "at the moment" (*einstweilen*) in the first sentence, makes Marx say: "We are not concerned[39], therefore, with what this or that proletarian, or even the proletariat as a whole, may regard as its aim." He then "explains" Marx's thought as follows: "A disciplined minority, which during the period of revolutionary action remains a minority, may yet interpret the Real Will of the people or of the proletariat and comprehend what, by theoretical necessity, that people or proletariat will 'be compelled to do', even although that people is actually unconscious of this Will or Process."[40] This is a doctrine which bears a marked resemblance to the usually unspoken assumptions behind the paternalism of a certain school of "Marxists"[41]—but none at all to Marx's own views!

In a more recent book "refuting" Marxism, Mr. Bertram D. Wolfe attacks Marx for pronouncing "his version to be inevitable", giving those possessing it "an illusion of their own infallibility and the firm support of history" and "hence, also, of the predestined and unchallengeable right to enforce their blueprint upon more ignorant, recalcitrant men. What mercy," he continues sarcastically, "should be shown to men who stood in the way of History and opposed her will, who rejected the tenets of science and refused to abide by them?"[42] The ascription of such "historicism" to Marx is a gross distortion of his whole scientific method.[43] "*History* does *nothing*," wrote Marx and Engels elsewhere in *The Holy Family*, "it possesses *no* immense wealth', it 'wages *no* battles.' It is *man*, that does all that, that possesses and fights; 'history' is not a person apart, using man as a means for *its own* particular aims; history is *nothing but* the activity of man pursuing his aims."[44]

Attitudes to Opposition

Another argument of anti-Marxists is that Marx's advocacy of the expulsion of the Anarchist Bakunin from the First International in 1872 proves that the one-party system "written into Marx's doctrine of dictatorship."[45] This is equally

[36] *Ibid.*, p. 44.

[37] *Ibid.*, p. 30.

[38] K. Marx and F. Engels, *The Holy Family* (London, 1956), p. 53. Their emphasis. The German original is in *Werke*, 2, p. 38.

[39] The German phrase in the original is, "Es handelt sich nicht darum", which means, "the question is not" or "it is not a question of".

[40] G. Catlin, *A History of the Political Philosophers* (London, 1950), p. 589.

[41] See, e.g. S. Kovalyov, "Sovereignty and the International Duties of Socialist Countries", *Soviet News*, October 1st, 1968, p. 6. The author says that "formal observance of the freedom of self-determination in that concrete situation which arose in Czechoslovakia" in the summer of 1968—i.e. letting the majority of the Czechoslovak people continue to pursue the course that they *actually* desired—"would mean freedom of 'self-determination' not for the masses of the people, the working men and women, but for their enemies"—i.e. they would choose a course deemed contrary to their Real Will of which they were unconscious. Action had to be taken to stop them doing this!

[42] B. D. Wolfe, *Marxism* (London, 1967), p. 380.

[43] The now widespread practice of attacking Marx as a "famous historicist" was initiated by Professor Sir Karl Popper in his books, *The Open Society and its Enemies*, Vol. II (London, 1945) and *The Poverty of Historicism* (London, 1957). For a Marxist refutation, see Maurice Cornforth, *The Open Philosophy and the Open Society* (London, 1968), esp. pp. 129-159, 178-187.

[44] K. Marx and F. Engels, *op. cit.*, p. 125. Emphasis in original.

[45] R. N. Carew Hunt, *Marxism:Past and Present* (London, 1954), p. 155.

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wide of the mark. Marx distinguished between the right of an organisation to expel from its ranks elements that disrupted its work or opposed its fundamental existence. Thus, in 1873, he wrote of the Anarchists that "in *open opposition* to the International these people do no harm but are useful,"[46] in the same way that, six years later, he spoke of the "perfect right" of "the representatives of the petty bourgeoisie" to form their own independent party outside the German Social Democratic Workers' Party, within which they were "an adulterating element."[47]

Within working class parties Marx and Engels favoured the fullest possible democracy for those who accepted the parties' basic aims. "The workers' movement is based on the sharpest criticism of existing society," wrote Engels in 1889 to the Danish Socialist Trier; "criticism is its vital element; how then can it itself avoid criticism, or try to forbid controversies? Is it possible for us to demand from others freedom of speech for ourselves only in order to eliminate it afresh in our own ranks?"[48]

Marx and Engels certainly stood for the use of resolute "dictatorial" measures against reactionary opponents in a civil war or a "pro-slavery rebellion" in which a ruling class refused to submit to a "peaceful and legal revolution."[49] They saw such "authoritarian" methods as fundamentally democratic when they were used to remove obstructions to the carrying out of the wishes of the majority of the people. There are no grounds however for arguing that they would have favoured the suppression of dissenting views as a normal feature of the dictatorship of the proletariat, of which they conceived as extending throughout the whole historical period between capitalism and a classless and stateless Communist society.

From Marx's first article, in 1842, denouncing press censorship, up to Engels' last political exposition in 1895 rejecting the idea of revolutions made in the interest of the majority of the people "by small conscious minorities at the head of unconscious masses"[50], their writings are permeated with a profoundly democratic, anti-élitist spirit.

Lenin and the Party

If some anti-Communist ideologists discover in Marx a source of alleged Communist élitism, it is Lenin's "theory of the Party" that most of them regard as the mainspring of the evil. It is claimed that there is a direct line of descent from Blanqui, through his Russian nineteenth century follower Tkachov and other revolutionary Narodniks, to Lenin and hence present-day Communism.[51] Lenin is said to have developed and applied the Blanquist conception of a highly disciplined, hierarchical organised, conspiratorial body of professional revolutionaries—the Party—that was to concentrate in its hands the decisive control of the Labour movement. Substituting itself for the workers, whom—we are told—Lenin "regarded as too stupid to see where their real interests lay", it strove to "engineer' the revolution for them.[52] From these "Leninist" organisational principles it followed inexorably that, if triumphant, the Bolsheviks would end up establishing, in the name of the workers, their own iron dictatorship. All competing parties and organisations would be suppressed. Hence, we are assured, the one-party system in Soviet Russia and Stalin's subsequent repressions were the logical outcome of Lenin's "élitist" views on the Party. Lenin's victory represented, in the words of Professor Brzezinski, of Columbia, in a recent article in *Encounter*, "the successful 'de-Westernisation' of Marxism, a victory of oriental despotic propensities over occidental democratic tendencies."[53]

The premise for this argument is Lenin's *What*

[46] K. Marx to F. Bolte, February 12th, 1873, *Werke*, 33, p. 566. Emphasis in original.

[47] K. Marx and F. Engels, "Circular Letter", September 17th-18th, 1879, *Sel. Cor.*, pp. 394-395.

[48] F. Engels to G. Trier, December 18th, 1889, *Werke*, 37, p. 328. This important letter, despite Engels' stipulation that it should only be published *in full*, has unfortunately only appeared in English without this part. (See *Sel. Cor.*, pp. 491-492). Engels expressed similar views on inner-party democracy in a number of other letters, written 1890-92. cf his letter to Bebel May 1st-2nd, 1891: "The Party needs Socialist science and this cannot exist without freedom of movement . . ." (*Werke*, 38, p. 94). Also his and Marx's condemnation in 1873 of "unity of thought and action" (a principle inscribed in the programme of Bakunin's Revolutionary Organisation of International Brothers, one of his hierarchically organised secret societies) as a Jesuit conception meaning "nothing other than orthodoxy and blind obedience". (*L'Alliance de la Démocratie Socialiste et l'Internationale*, in J. Freymond, Editor, *La Première Internationale: Recueil de Documents*, Geneva, 1962, II, p. 393).

[49] F. Engels, Preface (1886) to K. Marx, *Capital*, Volume I (Allen & Unwin edition, London, 1943), p. xiv.

[50] F. Engels, Introduction (1895) to K. Marx, *The Class Struggles in France*, *S.W.*, I, p. 123.

[51] See, e.g., A. B. Ulam, *Lenin and the Bolsheviks* (London, Fontana Ed., 1969), p. 109; B. D. Wolfe, *Three Who Made A Revolution* (London, Pelican Ed., 1966), p. 180; L. Schapiro, *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (London, 1960), p. 4. See, also, Professor G. Sabine's *A History of Political Theory* (London, 1960), p. 673: Lenin's conception of the Party "belonged not to Marx but to the French syndicalist (!) Blanqui". Such assertions were also made by Mensheviks and others during Lenin's lifetime.

[52] H. B. Mayo, *Introduction to Marxist Theory* (New York, 1960), p. 135.

[53] Z. Brzezinski, "The Soviet Past and Future", in *Encounter*, March, 1970, p. 3.

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is to be Done?, published early in 1902, which is so often presented as expounding *the* "Leninist" doctrine of the Party. In fact, it did no such thing. Already in 1907, in his foreword to a collection of his writings, which included *What is to be Done?*, Lenin cautioned against those who made the "basic mistake" of treating the pamphlet "apart from its connection with the concrete historical situation of a definite, and now long past, period in the development of our Party." It was "a controversial correction of economist distortions and it would be wrong to regard the pamphlet in any other light."[54] (Unfortunately this warning has not been included in separate editions of this pamphlet published in English.)

In 1902 Lenin had, as he was to explain, emphasised the idea of an organisation of professional revolutionaries in an "exaggerated" way because in the prevailing conditions of Tsarist absolutism this was the next step required to establish, out of the amorphous Social-Democratic circles, an effective Marxist party capable of making an impact on the revolutionary struggles ahead. Taking advantage of the "temporary spell of freedom" provided by the 1905 Revolution, this party was quick to broaden its whole composition by a mass recruitment of industrial workers and to build "a legal organisation with an ideal democratic structure, an electoral system and representation at congresses according to the number of organised members."[55]

Democratic Centralism

Lenin's conception of democratic centralism, the Party's basic organisational principle, in no wise envisaged the suppression of dissent in its ranks. It was necessary, he wrote in 1903, that they should "hospitably throw open the columns of the Party organ for exchanges of opinion", affording an opportunity to groups in the Party with divergent views systematically to set them out. The whole Party must have "*all, absolutely all the material* required" to make an "independent judgement" on all the issues in dispute, which should, as far as possible, not be concealed from the outside public, either. He warned against being "too harsh and stiff-necked . . . towards 'anarchic individualism' ", even if to do so involved "a certain departure from tidy patterns of centralism and from absolute obedience to discipline."[56] The next year, in his famous pamphlet on Party organisation, *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*, he wrote: "A struggle of *shades* in the Party is *inevitable and essential*, as long as it does not lead to anarchy and splits."[57] And, in 1909, when Bolsheviks and Mensheviks were still in one party, he explained that "a party can contain a whole gamut of opinions and shades of opinion, the extremes of which may be sharply contradictory."[58]

In Lenin's lifetime the internal life of the Bolshevik Party, even during the Civil War, was characterised by free debate and discussion within the framework of the Party's programme. The leaders of the Party took part in this in the Party press and at congresses, frequently arguing opposing views on major policy issues until these were resolved by a democratic vote. After this it was the duty of all members to carry out majority decisions under the direction of the leading bodies by the membership, whilst having the right to retain their former viewpoint.

In September 1920, in the final stages of the Civil War, the Ninth Party Conference declared that "it is necessary in the inner life of the Party to practise more widespread criticism both of the local as of the central bodies of the Party. . . . It is impermissible to carry out any sort of reprisals against comrades who have different opinions about questions which have been decided by the Party."[59]

The Tenth Party Congress in 1921, which banned factional groupings and platforms, by no means envisaged outlawing controversial debate. On the contrary, it decided to publish a periodical *Discussion Bulletin* and special symposiums, in which this could take place.[60] In addition, on Lenin's insistence, it not only re-elected to the Central Committee Trotsky, Bukharin and others whose platform on the trade union question had been defeated at the congress, but also brought on to it two leaders of the "Workers' Opposition", Shlyapnikov and Kutuzov, as well as V. V. Osinsky, who had been leading another leftist opposition group,

[54] V. I. Lenin, Preface (September 1907) to the Collection *Twelve Years*, *Collected Works* (Moscow/London, 1960-1970), hereafter *C.W.*, Volume 13, pp. 101, 108. This comment should not, of course, be taken to mean that *What is to be Done* does not also contain much that is of general validity—in particular, its emphasis on the indispensable role of a party guided by the most advanced theory in helping to develop Socialist consciousness in the working class.

[55] *Ibid.*, pp. 102-105.

[56] Letter to *Iskra* (November 1903), *C.W.*, 7, p. 116. Emphasis in original.

[57] *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back* (May 1904), *C.W.*, 7, p. 347. Emphasis in original.

[58] "Report on Conference of *Proletary* Editorial Board (June 1909), *C.W.*, 15, p. 430.

[59] *Die Kommunistische Partei der Sowjetunion in Resolutionen und Beschlüssen* (Berlin, 1957), Volume 3, p. 155.

[60] Lenin, Tenth Party Congress (March 1921), *C.W.*, 32, p. 243. The Congress followed Lenin's advice to reject as "far too prohibitive" an amendment seeking to add that such bulletins be issued only by the Central Committee or its Regional Bureaux. (*C.W.*, 42, pp. 283-4).

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the "Democratic Centralists". Lenin intended that this should "emphasise our desire to be fair" and give an "expression of comradely confidence" in comrades who had adhered to the opposition.[61] Yet those who seek to show Lenin as the architect of the monolithic party point particularly to this congress in support of their thesis. The facts, which are all too little known, do not support them.

Lenin and Political Liberty

In his revolutionary perspectives Lenin was inspired by the same democratic and anti-élitist principles as Marx and Engels. In common with all Russian Marxists, up to February 1917 he saw the next stage as a bourgeois democratic revolution against the Tsarist autocracy. In leading such a revolution, the working class—constituting a minority of the population—would need to ally itself with the peasant majority. This alliance would be reflected in "the participation and even the predominance of the most diversified representatives of revolutionary democracy" in the government that would come to power on the basis of a "revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry." A workers' government at this stage would be impossible, he argued against Parvus and Trotsky, "because only a revolutionary dictatorship supported by the vast majority of the people can be at all durable."[62] For Lenin, as for Marx, such dictatorship meant "defence against counter-revolution and the actual elimination of everything that contradicted the sovereignty of the people."[63] And he warned: "Whoever wants to reach Socialism by any other path than that of political democracy will inevitably arrive at conclusions that are absurd and reactionary both in the economic and the political sense."[64]

Like Marx and Engels, Lenin did not see political liberty as an abstraction. It meant concretely "the right of the people themselves to choose all their officials, arrange all kinds of meetings for the discussion of all state affairs, and publish whatever papers and books they please without having to ask for permission."[65] He welcomed the workers' Soviets (councils) when they sprang up spontaneously in the 1905 Revolution, as providing in embryo a new form of state power, which "in the freest, widest and most resolute manner, enlisted all the masses in the task of government." This authority "concealed nothing, it had no secrets, no regulations, no formalities." It was "open to all, it carried out its functions before the eyes of the masses, was accessible to the masses, sprang directly from the masses, and was a direct and immediate instrument of the popular masses, of their will."[66]

Such political freedom presupposed the free struggle of political parties, as Lenin often stressed. Great as were the frauds perpetrated in the contests between them for election to representative institutions, in their absence "the people have much fewer means of exposing the deception and finding out the truth," he wrote in 1912.[67] "In free countries", he insisted five years later, "the people are ruled through an open struggle between parties and by free agreement between these parties."[68]

Winning a Majority

After the February Revolution of 1917 overthrew Tsarism, the aim of passing from the bourgeois-democratic revolution to the Socialist revolution could be placed on the order of the day. So long, however, as they remained in a minority in advocating this, the Bolsheviks must confine themselves "patiently to explaining" their point of view and winning support for it. "You cannot disregard the people," Lenin emphasised. "Only dreamers and plotters believed that a minority could impose their will on a majority. That is what the French revolutionary Blanqui thought, and he was wrong. When the majority of the people refuse, because they do not yet understand, to take power into their own hands, the minority, however revolutionary and clever, cannot impose their desire on the majority of the people."[69] Without a majority, not only "among the front ranks of the revolutionary classes" but "in the country generally", there could be "no question of insurrection."[70]

As late as the middle of September 1917, despite the repressive measures taken against his party by

[61] Lenin, Tenth Congress, *C.W.*, 32, pp. 257-8, 260. At the same time the Congress called on all members of the dissolved "Workers' Opposition" to submit themselves to party discipline. (*Ibid.*, p. 260; *K.P.S.U. in Resolutionen*, Volume 3, p. 190).

[62] "Social Democracy and the Provisional Revolutionary Government" (April 1905), *C.W.*, 8, p. 291.

[63] Lenin, *Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution* (July 1905), *C.W.*, 9, p. 133.

[64] *Ibid.*, p. 29.

[65] Lenin, *To the Rural Poor* (March, 1903), *C.W.*, 6, p. 368.

[66] Lenin, *The Victory of the Cadets and the Tasks of the Workers' Party* (April, 1906), *C.W.*, 10, pp. 244-5. Lenin reproduced this in October 1920 in his article, "A Contribution to the History of the Question of Dictatorship", *C.W.*, 31, pp. 351-2.

[67] "Political Parties in Russia" (May 1912), *C.W.*, 18, p. 45.

[68] *Lessons of the Revolution* (September 1917), *C.W.*, 25, pp. 227-8.

[69] "Report at Meeting of Petrograd Organisation" (May 1917), *C.W.*, 41, p. 433.

[70] *Can the Bolsheviks Retain State Power?* (October 1917), *Selected Works* (Moscow/London, n.d.—1937?), Volume 6, p. 293.

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the pro-capitalist Provisional Government, Lenin was seeking a "compromise". The Bolsheviks would work for a government of S.R's (members of the populist peasant "Socialist-Revolutionary Party") and Mensheviks, responsible to the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies, in which these parties still had a majority. In proposing this, Lenin declared: "*We* have nothing to fear from real democracy, for reality is on our side. . . ."[71]

The Mensheviks and S.R's were not prepared to accept Lenin's proposals and so closed the door to the last possibility of a peaceful revolutionary development. The people were already coming close to desperation in both town and countryside. Peasant revolts had broken out over more than half of the European part of Russia. Meanwhile there was a danger that the bourgeoisie would surrender revolutionary Petrograd to the Germans.

[71] "On Compromises" (September 1917), *C.W.*, 25, pp. 307-8. Emphasis in original.

Lenin carefully studied the growth of popular support, as shown by election results, and concluded from the end of September that "the majority of the people are on our side." In such a situation it was both possible and necessary for the Bolsheviks to organise an armed insurrection and to take power at once, without waiting for a "formal" majority. History would never forgive them if they did not seize power now, when they were certain of victory.[72]

The second part of this article will be published in our next issue.

[72] "The Bolsheviks Must Assume Power" (September 1917), *C.W.*, 26, pp. 19-21. Lenin was more explicit and more exact when he wrote in his Letter to the Central Committee etc. of October 14th that "together with the Left Socialist Revolutionaries" they had "an *obvious* majority *in the country*". (*C.W.*, 26, p. 140. Emphasis in original). See, also, Letter to I. T. Smilga, October 10th, 1917, *C.W.*, 26, p. 71.

The Philosophy of Anarchism

Pat Sloan

Mick Costello was right in the March issue of *Marxism Today* to underline the basic differences that have always divided Marxists and Anarchists, especially when such a variety of anarchistic ideas (against all Establishments) are circulating among youth. But just as, in the past, we Marxists have tended to reject too much that came from non-Marxist sources, I feel that his articles give the impression that the contribution of anarchists has been entirely negative, without attempting to sort out anything positive.

Hence this plea that Marxists should not ignore the very positive contribution which Kropotkin made in his last years (in England, before his return to Russia in 1918) to the study of ethics. His unfinished work under this title was published by Harrap in 1924 and is, alas, now out of print. Otherwise I would strongly recommend it for every Marxist, especially in these days of Morris, Lorenz and Ardrey with their "naked ape" view of the inevitability of "aggression".

It is instructive to note that his *Ethics* Kropotkin pointed to the instincts of man inherited from the animal kingdom, stressing the fact that "warfare in Nature is chiefly limited to *struggle between different species*, but that *within each species*, and within the group of different species which we find living together, the practice of *mutual aid is the rule . . . the predominant fact of nature . . .* that Darwin described as *'a permanent instinct'*". (*Op. cit.* pp. 14-15).

Starting from Nature, with instincts both of individual survival and of mutual aid, Kropotkin traces the evolution in human society of "two sets of diametrically opposed feelings. In one set are the feelings which induce man to subdue other men in order to use them for his individual ends, while

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The Decline and Rise of Wage Systems

Alan Spence

The pamphlet "Productivity Agreements" by Bert Ramelson, is a most valuable, lucid, and fundamental contribution to the problem of wage improvement in the conditions of the capitalists' new offensive against the working class of Britain.

However, there are matters relating to this problem which are relevant—but not touched upon—and there are other matters he raises which require further discussion.

Though paying full tribute to the contribution of the shop stewards, he makes no mention of their offspring, the Combine Shop Stewards' Committee. Because of this neglect a vital and developing aspect of trades unionism is left out of the scheme of things when, if everything had been given its proper relation, this would have been shown as being a leading, new element in trade union life.

Nor does he take up the need for establishing Industrial Committees, with these—in the case of metal manufacturing—to become an integral part of the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions.

Furthermore, the resistance to productivity deals until demands for shorter hours, higher wages etc. are met, only modify the problem and *do not* provide a recipe for its solution.

And this is because productivity deals and measured day-work objectives are simply the surface aspect, the appearance and not the essence, of a phenomenon which is rooted in the basis of industry—and that phenomenon is *automation.*

To confine our demands to those suggested by Bert Ramelson, would leave the root untouched. We have, in order to maintain, let alone improve our living standards, to be able to tap automation at its source. So that, as automation moves, so do the wages attached to it.

Background to our Unions

It is a commonplace to say it and, like so many common places, it becomes increasingly soporific, so much so that the existing is often mistaken for the eternal—but our unions were based upon the craft unions which arose to meet the needs of combining tradesmen of similar and special skills. They arose in an industrial setting in which ownership was dispersed and in which manu- and machino-facture were the dominant forces of production—with our general unions arising out of the same conditions to meet the needs of the unskilled worker.

With changes in industrial technology new types of workmen were called into being to man these new processes. Some of these new workers were recruited by the craft unions and some by the general unions. But, so much have industry and the unions changed since those early days, that now a man can be enrolled into the AEF, the TGWU and GMWU or any of half-a-dozen others, according to the geographical area, who in that particular factory have established negotiating rights or, simply, which shop steward gets to the worker first. Today, these three largest unions accept skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers. The consequence of this is that extensive and obvious overlapping exists.

Overlapping

This overlapping leads not only to wasteful and expensive duplication of work, but when its members are in dispute or facing some industrial crisis, they show themselves to be nothing but lumbering anachronisms. And this arises not solely because of organisational structure, which would prove a major handicap even if all the leading positions were occupied by militants. For these organisations were formed, in the main, to meet needs which, at that time, were logical and correct. But those days are past and the present structures need radical surgery and reshaping to make them logical and correct for present conditions.

That this is generally recognised is not denied. Nor, can the small adjustments vis-à-vis some unions be overlooked, or the steady drift into new amalgamations; but this drift and these adjustments are inadequate. This, of course, is recognised by communists and the left, but a discussion on measured-day work cannot be thorough-going without some consideration of whether the form of union organisation which will be required to handle this particular requirement is adequate.

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Information

One of the ways in which the present structure shows its inadequacy, is in the lack of knowledge of any particular industry so common amongst full-time officials.

And this is so because the officers who staff the various committees of the unions wear coats of many colours. In the morning they may be discussing the conditions in railway workshops and in the afternoon the position in some biscuit factories. The consequence of this is that they cannot become specialists because they are not with any one job long enough to do more than acknowledge its existence. And even if they did specialise, where would they turn for the detailed information? Their research departments are too thinly staffed and afflicted with the disease of generality—though some moves have recently been made to alter things.

Any unionist within the Confederation who requires information about his industry has, invariably, to thumb through the various trade journals, periodicals and books in the reference room of the local library. Sometimes the TUC produce a pamphlet or a union journal does a write-up on a topic. But the fact remains, that to collect the quantitative data for getting some measure of an industry, the Confederation make a very poor job of it.

It must be admitted, the TGWU does the best of the big three, but their smallness inside the Confederation inhibit them from doing the job their structure permits. For the TGWU, compelled by the plethora of unions which combined for its birth, is organised, in the only possible way it could function with any sense of order, into industrial sections. The structure thus resulting making it much the more suitable form for present day needs. It suffers, however, from, and is part of, the general tangle of eclecticism.

The only significant exception to this general rule of the sparcity of knowledge, is the information provided in the quarterly report of the CSEU by its Shipyard Committee. They produce, with unfailing regularity, a document so detailed in its quantitative documentation that the products of the rest of the industrial committee are, by comparison, poverty-stricken.

Significantly, the Shipyard Committee is the only capable of producing a policy document for the industry which can be looked upon with any real authority and respect. The other committees produce snippets and trust to the generous hand of socialist inspiration to drag them from the mire of capitalist anarchy.

Besides this shortcoming of the present structure there is also the crucial one of the diffusion it permits in industrial struggles. The major battles which have been won in the past in spite of the structure and, if the present structure continues, further battles will still be won; but with increasing difficulty.

For the forces of production provide the content from which the trade unions take their form. With changes in the forces of production so changes the content. If the form does not change to cope with the new content, collisions between content and form occur.

Because content is the decisive aspect of this relationship it compels us to determine its nature and then to understand the form it is assuming so that we are able to decide the changes necessary.

Branches or Place of Work

If we look at the old craft unions we find that they were not organised, after their origins, at their place of work but in their various branches, organisations which stood external to the point of production. They functioned as rudimentary forms, embracing only part of the workpeople employed in a factory or workplace.

Each of these crafts stood apart, proud of their separate identity and jealous of the differences which gave them that identity. At a certain stage this desire for a separateness was beneficial, for from this arose the possibility of cohesiveness, of the working together of those with something substantially common to each other.

At a further stage of development this aloofness was found to be a drawback when some problem common to all groups afflicted them. Various external forms of organisation arose to meet these needs; federations, confederations, trades councils etc. But the internal organisation which developed to cope with these separate identities was, in the factories at any rate, the Joint Shop Stewards' Committee.

The difference between the external organisation and the internal organisation lies in this; that the external organisation confronts the generalised relations of production, the capitalist class in general, whereas the internal organisation confronts the particular relation of production, the capitalist class in particular.

Therefore the internal organisation becomes the more important of the two. Because it is this which each and every working day is in immediate and direct struggle with the capitalist class; it is the funnel through which is poured the immediate aspirations of the working class.

JSSC

Barriers of craft and job distinction, which formerly held them apart, become flexible under the knowledge that the rod of the 'boss' makes all their backs smart. They no longer see themselves

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as just members of this or that union but as members of the JSSC, a group who are as much part of each other as a team of players. And what strengthens this team is their way of life. Their work conditions imposed by the managerial staff is invariably one of extreme harshness. Remedial action against this from the remoteness of the external organisation is, at best, tepid. But the internal organisation of shop stewards can, and does take immediate ameliorative action. Any softening of the conditions inside the workplace is due to the conditioning influence of the shop steward's movement. And this is so vividly demonstrated to the workers' in industry that its defence becomes a paramount concern. For it meets with the most bitter opposition from the employer. And for decades, the struggle has raged to make this into the forceful voice it is today.

Making for this single organisation of trades unionists at their place of work was not only the growth of understanding of themselves as an exploited class but also the technological basis of industry. Crafts were based upon a large degree of hand skill. The growth of machinery eroded the extensiveness of this form of production, driving some unions into extinction, compelling others to change to new materials and skills and forcing new amalgamations. With the insistent growth of the machine content of production, and the gradual elimination of hand labour, the processes of production make the workers into the attendants of machines. And these machines, being indifferent to the organisational forms which men placed themselves in, classify all workmen who stand in attendance in exactly the same relationship. Hence, irrespective of the loyalty to their external forms of organisation and the influence this had upon the particular craft organisation, these influences become more and more peripheral as the internal growth of sameness draws them ever closer together.

Parallel to the changes in the technological structure of industry and the consolidation of workers within a single organisation, have developed changes in the ownership of industry. Ownership, formerly widely dispersed, came to be held by a decreasing number of capitalists.

Just as the external trade union organisations of the various establishments have never been able to make the improvements that the internal Joint Shop Stewards Committees have been able to win, so the external organisations have not been able to obtain from the monopolists the benefits modern technology promise. (For it is notorious how little over the past years has been obtained from negotiations between the employers' Federation and the CSEU).

The failure of the CSEU has been due not only to right-wing domination but also to the structure which hampers struggle.

For the Confederation, lacking any organisational links with internal organs of struggle, has never been able to confront capitalists in particular, in a routine and direct manner. But only occasionally and then, indirectly. Therefore the direct responsibility for combating the advantages of large scale organisation, monopoly ownership and singleness of leadership accruing to the capitalist class, and its ability to direct work to cheaper districts (or countries), to move production from one strike-bound factory to another, to close factories in maximising of profits, has fallen upon the shoulders of the Shop Stewards' Committees.

Combine Committees

From this necessity to organise to combat the monopolies arose the Combine Committees. Organisations, embracing all the shop stewards committees of the separate factories under a single monopoly ownership, they reflect the changed character of industry and are a product of the new circumstances which trades unionism has to contend with in the era of monopoly power and control.

On these committees, more marked than even on the JSSC, is the almost total disregard of the union to which the members belong. The major light in which a trades unionist is seen is in his contribution to the work of the combine. And, as the Combine Committees are invariably based upon an industry they come to orientate their work upon the basis of that industry, increasingly identifying themselves with the fortune of that industry and take a collective interest which is foreign to their experience where, usually, an attendance of twenty members will find them representing half as many industries.

From this higher form of collective interest emerges not only the ability to improve work conditions in their individual factories but the capacity to be able to see a large segment of the industry they are involved in and the awareness that they must influence the course of development of that industry.

This awareness of their industry generates the recognition of their relationship with other combine committees within that industry, and, at a certain stage of development, the Industrial Committee comes into being.

Industrial Committees

Whilst Combine Committees are long and solidly established most industrial committees have had an ephemeral existence. Their short life was due to the opposition they met from the leadership of the unions, to the administrative difficulty of part-time unionists, and to the fact that consciousness of monopoly control had not so decisively matured as to make trades unionists feel their necessity to be imperative. Only during periods of extreme

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crisis did this recognition become dominant, to die away as soon as the immediate need passed. But each crisis and each coming together of the combines left, when it receded, a sediment of understanding which now, pushed on by the rapidity of recent and increasing monopolisation, is objectively ready to firmly establish this new and advanced form of workers' organisation.

Bringing together all the combine committees the Industrial Committee stands a singleness of organisation adequate to meet the singleness of organisation of the capitalist. Or, because of the different ownership of the few monopolies, the Industrial Committees may be able to reverse the policy of divide and rule, to use it against the monopolies, and gain advantages that are impossible with the old and existing structure.

From this it will be readily seen that the old 'jack-of-all-trades' full time officials would be at a loss in the Industrial Committee, because they would have—by the form or organisation—to be basically concerned with one industry, they would have to become specialists, because increasingly they will have to base their tactics and strategy of struggle upon the real life movement of an industry. And it is impossible to do such without a deep and detailed knowledge of that industry and a perspective of its historical role in the sphere of technology.

Furthermore, because the removal of the wage-mechanism (about which more later) which governs the existing relationship of the shop steward to the individual worker on the job itself changes from being direct and patently visible, to the covert and indirect one of negotiation by indirect committee, it means that more than ever will the shop stewards and unions have to retain their traditional solidarity by ideological means, meetings, leaflets and above all a regular *newspaper*, a newspaper that is not a general one, but one particularly for that industry or that combine. This again is something the existing structure cannot do. Some factories and combines do publish or have published their own newspapers, but to be effective this must be lifted from the occasional to the normal, so that every industry has its own special newspaper. However, all those who have had experience of changing the existing structure of the trades unions know how long and protracted a job it is. But it should not be too difficult to gain acceptance for the recognition of industrial committees. Already the major union in the past opposed to the combine committees has recently come over to their acceptance. And recognition of the industrial committees is but a heightened understanding of that recognition.

Furthermore, the industrial committees, which link the worker on the shop floor through a natural line of connections, could, without any major difficulty, be absorbed into the already existing industrial committee of the CSEU. And this would be their natural resting place. For at this point the internal and the external sides of the unions meet. To win this conception may not be easy. But once it is won then this part of the trade union movement will be in the correct relationship of form and content and this will quite clearly indicate the way forward to rationalising the outdated structures of some of our unions.

The Measured Day

That we are in a new situation in which our traditional policies just will not operate is clear for everybody to see. For with the inexorable introduction of automated techniques the traditional wages role of the shop steward vanishes. Such improvements as have taken place in the recent years in the wages on the shop floor have been due, in the main, to the activities of the shop stewards. And the shop stewards' strength to do this has been established because their necessity was seen by every workman in the place of work.

But more than this, for the steady encroachment of piecework throughout the engineering industry threw up the shop stewards as the collective expression of the organised workers at the central point of the wages struggle; the daily and unceasing battle over the piecework prices.

Whilst the shop stewards undertook and fought with the utmost militancy for protection of their members, safety, sick benefits redundancy etc., their collective description "fringe benefits" adequately expresses their relationship to wages.

Wages developed under the piecework system because labour is a power which can be varied. The individual workman can either be driven by fear or by incentives. Whilst the capitalists have used both, with the growth in strength of the trades unions the element of fear diminished and, therefore, the factor of incentives became uppermost. Because labour power does differ between individuals and a new job is to a certain extent an unknown quantity, price is a matter of judgement. When the workers were poorly organised this judgement invariably swung against the individual workmen. But when they became highly organised this judgement could be swung to the favour of the worker.

With automation the labour power of the individual workman as a contribution to the production of the article does not exist. Whereas before he participated in the creation of an object, now he stands external to it, watching it being created for him. And in this process judgement of effort does not exist, for each production cycle is already known with exact mathematical calculation.

It will be seen therefore that the prime condition which produced the shop steward will no longer

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exist. And, as the basis of the existence of the shop steward was his fundamental contribution to the wages struggle—through which struggle emerged the persistent upward movement of wages characterised by the bourgeois economist as "wage-drift" —the question emerges of how will the shop stewards' organisation provide the fundamental contribution of wage improvement under the condition of the new technology.

Already the question is being asked with great urgency. For, though the introduction of automation is patchy, uneven with all the unevenness inherent in capitalist production (with some departments equipped with the most up-to-date techniques whilst other departments, in the same factory, are still in the early industrial revolution), it is being introduced with increased rapidity, making the present transitional stage between the old and the new disquieting in the extreme for those who have to organise both sections of the factory.

Yet for the shop stewards who have won substantial power, to relinquish this power is unthinkable. For it is the culmination of all the century and a half of trade union struggle. And, as this culmination resides upon a basis possessing the power to markedly influence wages, any departure from this position will be retrogressive.

Shop Stewards and Wages

So the only way acceptable is a way in which the shop steward can influence wages in the effective manner which he now possesses. For him to revert to leaving wages to the full-time officials external to the point of production, means that he relinquishes the power so far obtained and goes back to a previous stage in history.

The point may be argued that a militant leadership can still obtain wages comparable to those obtained by the workshop organisation. But this is not so. For the essential condition for the upward movement of wages has been the direct participation of the workers themselves at the point of production. The shop steward has been the means for making this participation effective and has ensured its consolidation, but all he is and has been is the instrument of the individual and collective workman.

Therefore, wage determination which, under the new conditions of production, does not provide for this participation, is doomed to worsen the established conditions of employment.

One has only to look at the figures quoted by G.H.B. Cattell in the *Financial Times* 12.6.67 (quoted by Alex Murray; *Comment* 2.11.68) who showed:

	1957	1965	*Nation. Inc.*	*Drift*
	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.
Average of 4 pieceworking firms (average earnings)	7 11½	13 6½	1 9¾	3 9¼
Firm with fixed rate (hourly)	6 6	9 3½	1 9¾	11¾

Also, if we look at the workplaces where the contribution of the workman is that of rendering a service, his wages invariably stand lower than one which is at the point of production.

He may attempt to close the gap by other means, longer overtime usually, but he ultimately relies upon the factory worker at point of production for his wage level, who indicate the parity he claims when worsening conditions produce an explosion.

From the above we see that the central core of wage determination is the creative role played by the working class at the point of production, not only in its organisational forms but also by the individual playing a constituent part in the historical process. Men make their own history and part of that history is the wages the working class obtains for itself. The organisational forms which the working class throw up in the course of this simply facilitates this historical purpose. As soon as one historical form has fulfilled its purpose, it is discarded and one more suitable adopted. Nor is the discarding of old forms confined to the working class, for this is what the capitalist class is doing with the piecework form of wage determination. It is doing this because the old form is useless and making for the obsolesence of the old form is the new technology.

And hastening them on to the introduction of the new technology is not only the desire for profit, the whip of competition and the advance of science and technology, but also the power of the working class to compel wage increases.

With the continued growth of monopoly, not only must this compulsive power of the working class continue; it must be intensified. For with near monopoly a tendency to passivity and the maximisation of prices occur; the few monopolists agree to a share of the market etc. But monopoly is never perfect under the avariciousness which dominates capitalism. External, foreign monopolies exert their influence—though these are invariably secondary, for it is the internal content of struggle that is the decisive part. And to this internal content of struggle, the working class must contribute that which the enhanced power of their trade union organisations permit. For higher wages are the yardstick by which history measures the advance of the working class. This same yardstick also measures the historical decline of the capitalist class. For, insofar as wages are a factor of compulsion in the modernisation of industry, so too will rise the organic composition of capital and thus diminish the rate of profit.

Piecework or Day Work

To retard this process the harried monopolist seeks to increase the rate of exploitation, and central to this process of increasing the rate of exploitation, is the intention to abolish piecework

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and introduce day work wherever the conditions of the new technology offer facilities for introducing the change. Hence it is that the most bitter wages battles of our long and battle-strewn history are approaching in those industries where the old piecework price traditions are strongly established and in which the most significant and advanced new automated processes are coming into being. For, equally central to the working class struggle must be the rejection of the measured day work *until alternative means are enforced* for the maintenance and improvement of the wages of the production workers.

That these improvements cannot be obtained from the old methods of piecework has been clearly demonstrated, simply because piecework is no longer possible. Therefore, the only way forward to ensure the upward trend in wages and standards, is for them to have some say in the *division of profits.*

This must be so, for wages, under the piecework system, are internally linked to the production process. Each detail has its price which is paid simultaneous to its production. Therefore, the worker directly and immediately influences the quantity of wages he receives. Because each detail has its price fixed at its production, if the price is not right the detail can be stopped going into production. This gives a power to the individual workman and the shop steward—who expresses the collective workman—to determine wages. And usually he can determine his wages within the accepted norms for his establishment without calling upon the collective strength of his shop.

The superiority of this system reveals itself in the £10 per week advantage the car workers in the factories on piecework were able to obtain against the day-work wages paid in Fords factories.

Wages, however, under the day-work system are externally linked to the production process. Not the "detail" but the "whole" receives the price. And this whole can only be measured against the "profit" of the particular production process. Therefore wages are determined by an external claim against the factory. Failing satisfaction, the whole of the workers are pitted against the whole of the profit.

With militant struggle, in favourable conditions, wages can be uplifted. But the *built-in* disadvantage reveals itself most starkly when we see that the very recent, militant struggle at Fords ended with them still £6 per week behind! So where will they be when next they have to mobilise for mass struggle—£12 behind?

No the only way is to negotiate the division of profits. No other course within the confines of capitalism is possible. For the traditional meeting ground for the determining of wages has moved from the shop floor to the finance departments and, therefore, the shop stewards must move with it.

Until this practice is established as a right, a policy of one man to one machine must be operated; with that man paid the average earnings received by the workman who has been priced according to the old piecework method. Even if the rest of the factory goes over to the new technology leaving only one machine and operator priced on the old method, the rest of the factory wages can only be sure of the upward trend by fixing rates according to that machine!

That the right to negotiate the division of profit will not be won without the most protracted struggle hardly needs emphasising. But what does need thoroughly explaining is that without a clear understanding, without a sustained drive to bring home to the trade unionists that the next phase of struggle is centred upon the objective of a say in the influencing of the division of profits, the profits in the factories where the employers have already been able to introduce the measured work day, now 30 per cent of industry, will multiply. A clear and determined policy must be operated which rejects outright the change without that change also incorporating the new demands of the trades unionists.

These new demands will include therefore, the policy for a division of profits as the means for improving the conditions of the working class and also, the necessity for the unions within the Confederation to take the necessary steps to bring about the changes in structure. For how will it be possible for any but an expert in the knowledge of that industry to discuss the affairs for winning in the new conditions. It is self-evident that without the most thorough and detailed examination the trade union negotiators would be left dizzy in a fog of created bafflement. But the organisation of industrial committees would breed such experts. Whence, with our strategy clear, working within an organisational form that facilitates struggle for winning that objective, we shall be enabled to pin a further decoration to our battle-scarred banners, the most significant ever won by British trades unionism.

Published by the Communist Party, 16 King Street, London, W.C.2, and printed by Farleigh Press Ltd. (T.U. all depts.), Watford, Herts.

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Volume 34, No. 2 **Summer 1970**

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